THE VISION SPLENDID

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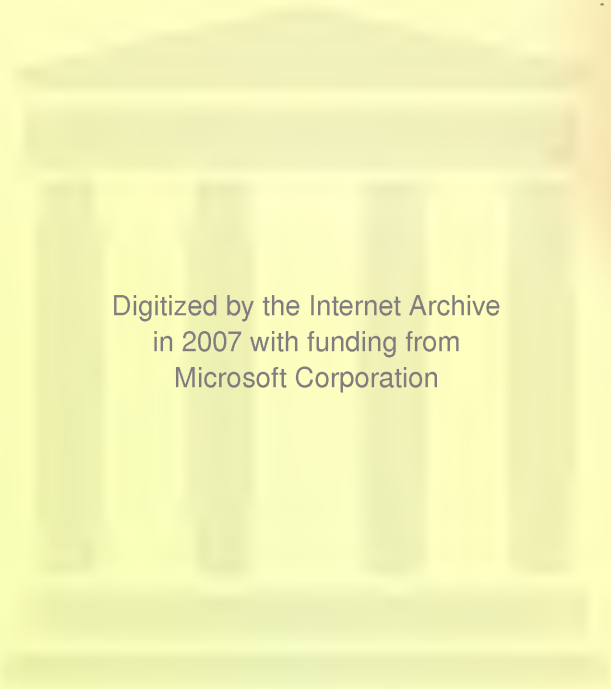

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BY

D. K. BROSTER AND G. W. TAYLOR

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BOOK I. CRAG AND TORRENT

BOOK II. GARISH DAY

BOOK III. LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT

EPILOGUE. THE MORN

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THE VISION SPLENDID

BOOK I

CRAG AND TORRENT

CHAPTER I

THE broad faces of the sunflowers surveyed, with their eternal, undiscriminating smile, the nape of Horatia's white neck, and were no wiser. Her back was towards them, and they could not see what book was in her lap. But the hollyhocks further down the border were probably aware that she was not really reading anything. They swayed a little, disturbing a blundering bee ; and Horatia, turning her head towards the flower-bed, glanced for a moment at those tall warriors en fête.

A gust of perfume suddenly shook out at her from the border. Certainly the summer seemed hardly within sight of its end, though on this Monday, the thirtieth of August, 1830, much of the corn was cut already.

Horatia's own summer was at the full, and it was now only old-fashioned people who thought the single woman of twenty-four in peril of the unblest autumn of perpetual maidenhood. For the sake of the red-gold bunches of curls at her temples, the dazzling skin that goes with such hair, the straight, wilful little nose, the

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mouth holding in its curves some petulance and much sweetness, an admirer might well have been sitting beside her in this agreeable old garden. Yet Horatia Grenville was not accounted a beauty. She was neither statuesque nor drooping. But part of the blame lay undeniably with the book on her lap, the *Republic* of Plato in the original. Horatia could and did read Greek without too much difficulty; could not, or would not, occupy her fingers for ever with embroidery or knitting, and was believed to despise amateur performance upon the harp. In short she was "blue," and therefore—at least in her own county—was not beautiful; she was learned, and could not, in Berkshire, be lovely.

Yes, she was twenty-four, and unmarried; a country parson's daughter, but well-born and well-dowered; suspected (unjustly) of knowing Hebrew as well as Greek, but always admirably dressed. She had never been in love, and had never, to her knowledge, even desired to taste that condition. Nor had she discovered in herself any aptitude for flirting. She wished sometimes that she did not frighten young men by her real or supposed intellectual attainments, but not for any plaudits of the drawing-room would she have bartered all that was typified to her by the Greek text on her knee. And she had no craving for domestic bliss.

Indeed, she could have had that bliss had she desired it. At least two decorous and (to her) entirely negligible requests had been made for her hand. They had come from quite suitable personages, whom she had met during her periodical sojourns with her various relations. Moreover, here, at home, five years ago, the man who had known her from a child, and was indeed a distant connection, had asked her to marry him.

That episode had startled and distressed Horatia. Tristram Hungerford, six years her senior, had always been a quasi-fraternal part of her life. The boy who came over daily on his pony from Compton Parva, what time a pony was still to her as an elephant, who was construing Livy with her father while her own fingers created the tremulous pothook, who climbed the Rectory apple-trees while her infant legs bore her but precariously on terra firma—whom she welcomed home from Eton with unrestrained joy and offerings of toffee, from Oxford as frankly but less exuberantly—that this young man should suddenly propose to make her his wife was absurd, and she did not like it at all. At nineteen, Horatia Grenville had been singularly immature for her times. She had no wish but that her playmate and friend should retain that rôle always ; why should he want to change it ? She signified as much, and to her great relief Tristram reverted with extraordinary completeness to his former part, and had filled it for five more years.

Miss Grenville had, however, taken no vow against matrimony. It was merely that she could not bear the idea of so sudden a finality. Even now she refused to picture herself sitting down, as she put it, to count over forks and spoons. Indeed, having returned but two days ago from a visit to a newly married friend, whose chief occupations, so it seemed to her guest, were quoting " what Henry says," and trying to out-do other young married women of her acquaintance in dress, she was still full of an almost passionate wonder that people could shut down their lives to that kind of thing. Yet, deep in her heart, perhaps she realised—perhaps she did not—that in six or seven years' time, when the fatuities of the recently-wed had dropped away from

Henry and Emilia, when there were children round them, they would have full lives, whereas she . . .

But Horatia greatly desired her life to be full. She wanted to express herself somehow. Sitting there by the sunflowers and the phloxes, she thought of the many women of the day who had succeeded in doing this. She thought of Mrs. Somerville, of Miss Mitford, of Hannah More and of Mrs. Fry; of Joanna Baillie and Miss Edgeworth; of Miss Jane Porter, whose *Scottish Chiefs* had delighted her childhood; and of Lady Morgan. Most of these celebrated women were unmarried. And she considered also the women of the past: Joan of Arc, St. Catherine of Siena, Madame de Rambouillet, Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu.

It was not that Horatia Grenville wished definitely either to lead a nation to battle or to write plays, to be an astronomical genius, or to sway the councils of princes. She wanted to do something, but knew not what that something was. This afternoon she was more conscious than usual both of her desire and of its vagueness. It occurred to her that she was rather like the sleepy wasp who, having painfully climbed up the skirt of her gown and attained the open page of the *Republic*, was now starting discontentedly to crawl down again.

"Really, I am getting morbid!" thought Miss Grenville; "and here is Papa!"

The Honourable and Reverend Stephen Grenville, Rector of Compton Regis, was seen indeed to issue at that moment from the long window of the drawing-room and to approach her over the grass, comfortable, benignant, and of aristocratic appearance. He held a half-written letter in one hand, and a quill pen in the other; his spectacles were pushed down his nose. His daughter jumped up.

"Do you want me, Papa?"

"My dear, only for this," replied Mr. Grenville, holding up the letter. "I am writing to your Aunt Julia, and you must really make up your mind whether you will pay her a visit this autumn. In her last letter she mentions the matter again."

Horatia looked up at her parent. "Papa," she answered gravely, "I don't like staying with people who disapprove of me." A sudden little smile came about the corners of her mouth. "I shouldn't stay with *you* if you didn't appreciate me, you know!"

The twinkle which was never far from the Rector's eyes came into them at this pronouncement. "Of that I have no doubt, my child," he said. "But it is a mercy that your aunt cannot hear your filial sentiments."

Horatia caught at his arm. "Sit down, dearest Papa," she said half imperiously, half coaxingly, "and let us discuss the visit to Aunt Julia."

The Honourable and Reverend Stephen, still holding paper and pen, submitted to be placed in her chair, Horatia, with the grace that was peculiarly hers, sat down upon the grass at his feet, her full skirt spreading fanwise around her.

"First," she began, taking hold of the letter, "we will see what you have said about me."

The Rector yielded it. "There is nothing at all about you as yet, my dear," he remarked mildly. "Your Aunt is thinking of putting some money into these new railroads, and asks for my advice."

Horatia made a face and returned the letter. "Papa, you always have the best of me! Now put down that pen—especially if there is still ink upon it, as I suspect—and I will show you many reasons why I should not pay Aunt Julia a visit. In the first place, she disapproves

of me because I do not make flannel petticoats for the poor; in the second place, she wishes to see me married; in the third place she calls Plato a heathen and Shakespeare 'waste of time.' In the fourth place, I am but just returned from visits elsewhere; . . . In the hundredth place—I prefer to stop with you. One hundred reasons against Aunt Julia." And she laid her fresh cheek upon the hand that held the letter.

The Rector pinched the cheek. "'La Reine le veult,' as usual, I suppose. Shall you always prefer to stop with me, Horatia?"

"It is my duty, Papa," said Miss Grenville, without lifting her head. The solemnity of her voice was too much for her father, and he broke, as she had intended he should, into a chuckle.

"That word on your lips!" he exclaimed. Then he put his hand gently on the smooth and radiant head. "I could bear to see you go from me," he said in a suddenly stirred voice, "if I knew you were going to a happy home of your own."

The head moved restlessly. "You know how much I dislike—how much I wish you would not talk of that, Papa!" said the girl almost shortly, and she raised herself. "Why must every woman get married? One would think that you wanted to be rid of me." Her cheeks were a little flushed. "But even if you did, I would not marry!" she added. "I would—never mind what I would do." She flung her arms round her father's neck and kissed him. "Do not speak of it again! You do not deserve to have such a good daughter. Now go and tell Aunt Julia that I cannot stay with her—say that I am translating Rousseau, that will make her furious—and tell her that a Christian

gentlewoman should not know anything about investments!"

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Having thus dismissed her parent, Miss Horatia Grenville did not return to her book or her reverie, but crossed the lawn, showing herself as tall and generously made in her dress of thin mulberry-coloured silk with the great puffed sleeves, trim waist and full short skirt of the prevailing fashion. Catching up a flat basket and a pair of scissors, she then walked up and down by the flower border, snipping off dead blossoms and singing to herself snatches of *Deh vieni*. So occupied, she heard the click of the garden gate. "Probably Tristram," she thought to herself. "It is quite time that he came."

And indeed a masculine figure was stooping to fasten the little gate at the end of the short privet-walled path, by which it had just entered. As it raised itself, and turned, it was revealed as that of a young man of about thirty, in riding costume, darker in hair and eyes than the majority of Englishmen, but none the less unmistakably English. Pleasant to look at, and more than common tall, he would not however have drawn the attention of a casual observer; a closer critic might have become aware of something in the eyes not quite consonant with his vigorous and every-day appearance.

Horatia put down her basket and went towards him, holding out both hands.

"I am so glad that you have come," she said frankly. "How are you, Tristram?"

"As usual, very glad to see you," responded the young man, smiling. "I wondered if you would be in. Where is the Rector?"

"Papa is writing to Aunt Julia, about investments

and about the difficulty of getting me to leave home."

"Before Martha has unpacked your trunks from this last visit, I suppose you mean?"

"Don't tease me, Tristram, when you have not seen me for so long! Come and sit down on the lawn and talk sensibly. Papa will be out soon, I expect. You will stay to dinner, of course?"

"I shall be very pleased," responded the guest, and he looked as if he were pleased too—as indeed he was—with his greeting. He walked beside her to her chair on the grass, picked up Plato, lying there face downwards, murmured "What shocking treatment for a philosopher!" fetched himself another chair from a little distance, and, sitting down by Miss Grenville, said "How did you enjoy your round of visits?"

"Not at all," replied Horatia petulantly, half laughing. "I have not said this to Papa, because it might make him conceited; but I will tell *you* that I am delighted to be home again." And she added, still more confidentially, "Tristram, the newly-married bore me extremely! I shall not visit Emilia Strangeways again for seven years at least."

Tristram Hungerford laughed. "All the better for us! It is dull enough without you."

"O, what stories!" exclaimed Horatia. "You have not been dull. You have had Mr. Dormer with you!" There was mockery in her eyes. "I know all about it. Tell me the truth now! How long did he stay?"

"A week, Horatia, only a week, and since then it has been duller than ever."

"That I can believe," retorted Miss Grenville; "but it has been dull because Mr. Dormer has left you, and not because I have been away. You have no one now

to exult with over the increasing circulation of the *Christian Year*, and no one to melt you with the sufferings of the Non-Jurors—which *I* think they brought on themselves. However, I must not jest about Mr. Dormer, I know; he is sacrosanct. Tell me any news. Tell me something interesting."

The life, the vitality that responded to hers, dropped suddenly out of Tristram Hungerford's face.

"I have got some news," he said hesitatingly, "but I am not sure that you will find it interesting. I have made up my mind at last, quite definitely, to take Orders—that is, if the Bishop will have me."

And at that Miss Grenville's face changed too, and after a moment's pause she said, very seriously, "Why?"

"Because," returned the young man almost guiltily, "I think that I may be able to serve the Church better that way, and the time is coming when we shall have to fight for her."

Horatia did not try to conceal her feelings. "I thought you were getting views of that sort," she said gloomily; "and I was afraid that it would end in your taking Orders—in fact, I said so to Papa the other day. Of course, in my opinion you are made for it; but I wish that you were not." She sighed, and added inconsequently, "It must make a difference."

Tristram flushed and leant forward. "But, Horatia, what do you mean? I shall never be any different—I never could be so to you!" The feeling in his voice was almost ardour—and it was not the ardour of a friend. Whether Miss Grenville were fully aware of this or no she pursued her own thoughts aloud.

"I wonder; I am not so sure. By taking Orders you will be throwing in your lot for ever with all those Oriel people. That is what it means."

"I cannot think," said the culprit, "why you dislike them so."

"It isn't that I dislike *them* exactly," said Horatia, considering; "but that there is something about them that I don't like. Even Mr. Keble, although he lives in the country and writes poetry, can't be as harmless as he seems, or they would not all pay him such deference. I have nothing against Mr. Newman and Mr. Froude; in fact I liked Mr. Froude when you brought him out here, which is more than I could ever say about Mr. Dormer. He can make himself very charming, but he's steel underneath, I'm quite certain. . . . Yes, they are all different, and yet they are alike. They are only clergymen, as Papa is, but at his age they won't be in the least like him. For one thing they won't be half as nice. There is something about them that makes me shiver. They are too absolute. I have the feeling that they will change you, that they are changing you! O, I can't explain it; but I know what I mean—and, Tristram, I could not bear that you should be different from what you are?"

She looked at him directly, earnestly, like a child pleading that something it likes may not be taken away from it, and never noticed her companion turn suddenly rather white.

"Horatia, if you——" he began, and suddenly the Rector's voice cut through his own—"What are you two discussing so warmly that you haven't heard the dinner-bell?" it said, coming before its owner as he emerged through the drawing-room window. "It's long after half-past five. Tristram, my dear fellow, I am very glad to see you. You are staying, of course?"

And after a barely perceptible pause the young man got up and said that he was.

CHAPTER II

"PAPA has really no right to be hungry," observed Miss Grenville as they sat down to table. "Saturday, you know, was our annual village feast, and he acknowledges that he is obliged to eat a great deal on that occasion."

"How did it go off, Rector?" asked the guest.

"Oh, quite successfully," replied Mr. Grenville, carving a leg of mutton. "There was a good deal to eat, I must admit. I left, as I always do, before the dancing; but not before I heard a swain (I think it was one of Farmer Wilson's men) assuring his inamorata that he would kiss her if she wished it."

"The lady seems to have been forward," observed Horatia. "Papa, you are not forgetting the plate of meat for old Mrs. Jenkins? You know you promised to send in her dinner while she is ill."

"No, my dear," returned her father, looking round. "I have not forgotten the meat, but Sarah appears to have forgotten the plates."

The handmaid fled and remedied her error. It was no unusual thing for the Rectory crockery to go voyaging in the cause of charity.

Horatia seemed in high though rather fitful spirits. She entertained her hearers with an account of her visits. At one house, she affirmed, she was entertained to death; at the other her host and hostess only seemed to want to be alone together, though they had pestered her to go there.

"You will find us, as usual, very quiet," said Tristram, looking across the table at her animated face. "I don't think anything has happened since you went away.—Stay, though, something has taken place in Oxfordshire. Rector, I suppose you have heard about the affair at Otmoor on Saturday night?"

Mr. Grenville had not.

"Well, Otmoor, as you know, was drained under Act of Parliament in 1815, and this proceeding has been a cause of discontent ever since, because the embankments were thought to prevent the water draining away from the land above. You remember the disturbances last June, and how the farmers cut the banks, and were indicted for felony, but acquitted on the ground that the embankments did do damage and were a nuisance?"

"Yes, I recall the circumstance," said the Rector.

"Well, the Otmoor people appear to have jumped to the conclusion that the Act of Parliament was void, the enclosure of Otmoor consequently illegal, and that they had a right to pull down the embankment. On Saturday night, therefore, they started to do so, and I believe they proceeded with the work last night also. They are said to have been riotous. I wonder you had not heard of it."

"Dear, dear," commented the Rector, "that is excessively serious! I am afraid that there is indeed a spirit of unrest abroad at present. There have been one or two rick fires lately that looked to me very suspicious, very. And then there was that barn near Henley about a fortnight ago."

"Do you think, then, that we shall have a revolution in England like the Days of July?" asked Horatia a little mischievously.

"No, of course not, my dear! The Revolution in

France the other day was above all things dynastic—at least, so I read it—and no one wants to turn out our new King, whom God preserve. But there *is* social unrest. . ."

"Good Heavens!" suddenly exclaimed Tristram Hungerford. "I had quite forgotten, and your mentioning the Days of July has reminded me. I've got a Frenchman, a Legitimist, coming to stay with me the day after to-morrow. You remember how, when I was in Paris a few years ago, I made the acquaintance of the sons of the Duc de la Roche-Guyon, the First Gentleman of the Bedchamber? I stayed with the eldest at their place in the country for a few days, and I asked them to come and see me if ever they were in England."

"But the Duc de la Roche-Guyon accompanied Charles the Tenth on his flight over here, and is now with him at Lulworth, is he not?" asked Horatia. "I remember seeing his name in the papers."

"Yes," said Tristram, "the Duc is at Lulworth with the King, and Armand, his younger and favourite son, has come over to pay him a visit. But I fancy that the young gentleman has no intention of remaining buried in Dorset; Lulworth is too dull for a person of his tastes, and he is returning to more congenial scenes in Paris—even though it be an Orleanist Paris. However, he has written from Dorset and suggested paying me a short visit. I own that I am rather surprised, for I am afraid that my chances of amusing him are not greater than those of his exiled sovereign. Moreover, I really hardly know him. It was his elder brother, the Marquis Emmanuel, of whom I saw more. . . . May I bring the youth here to call?"

"Do," said Miss Grenville. "Papa, did you know that Tristram considered us a centre of gaiety? It is a flattering but a burdensome reputation. If anyone

expects me to sparkle I am tongue-tied on the instant. I had better ask the Miss Baileys to come in."

"My dear," said the Rector impressively, "I beg you will do nothing of the sort. I cannot endure those young persons."

"I know it," replied his daughter.—"But, Tristram, it is a good thing that Mr. Dormer has left you. It is well known, is it not, that you may not have other guests when he is with you?"

A very slight colour came into Mr. Hungerford's face, and the Rector said rather quickly, "Is Mr. Dormer going to be in college till term begins?"

"Yes," answered the young man. "It is quieter for him, and he is very anxious to finish his book on the Non-Jurors. All the worry last term with the Provost —though, not being a tutor, he was not actually implicated—put him back in his work."

"I have no sympathy with Mr. Dormer's sufferings," declared Horatia. "You have told me before now, Tristram, that he has very high views about the authority of the Church. Why doesn't he have high views about the authority of the Provost?"

"But, Horatia," said Tristram earnestly, "don't you see that it was a matter of conscience? Newman and Wilberforce and Froude could not without a protest see their chances of influencing their pupils vanish, and themselves reduced to mere tutoring machines. If Keble had been elected Provost instead of Hawkins, the situation would never have arisen. Now they will have no more pupils after next year; and, as an Oriel man, I can't help thinking that it will be Oriel's loss."

"Don't argue with her, Tristram," said the Rector. "She is only teasing you."

"Not at all," returned Horatia. "My sympathies

are with the Provost ; and so are yours, Papa. Speak up now, and tell the truth. Did your tutor at Christ Church consider himself responsible for your soul ? "

" Well, no, I can't say that he did," admitted Mr. Grenville, remembering that port-drinking divine.

" There you are ! " exclaimed his daughter. " And look at the result ; could it be better ? Now these Oriel people want to make their pupils into horrid prigs, and all the parents in England ought to be grateful to the Provost for preventing it."

" Horatia," said the Rector, " this levity is not at all becoming. I don't myself agree entirely with either side. I have a great respect for the Provost, and at the same time I admire the spirit and high sense of duty of your friends, Tristram. Mr. Keble is of their opinion, and although I cannot go as far as he does, I am bound to say that the *Christian Year* seems to me to combine sound scholarship with a proper appreciation of our historic Church. Yes, they are good men, and I am sorry they have been defeated."

" And I," remarked Horatia impenitently, " am looking forward to seeing each with his one ewe lamb. How they will cherish their last pupil ! "

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When Tristram went, according to custom, into the Rector's study for a talk after dinner, the door was hardly shut behind them before Mr. Grenville said :

" I had a feeling this afternoon, when it was too late, that I interrupted you with Horatia at an unfortunate moment."

" No, Sir," replied the young man. " I think, on the contrary, that you saved me from making a blunder. One shock is enough for one afternoon."

"Ah," said Mr. Grenville, making his way towards his favourite chair. "You have told her then that you mean to take Orders?"

"I told her that I had practically made up my mind to do so."

"And what did she say?"

"I gathered that she wasn't surprised, and that she wasn't altogether pleased," returned Tristram with half a smile.

"She is out of sympathy with your views," commented the Rector, tapping with his foot. "And of course, as you know, I deplore extremes myself. But in time you would settle down. Still, I know quite well Horatia's dislike to what seem to be the growing views of the Oriel Common Room, and she appears to me to be quite unable to discuss the matter on its merits. She always says, 'Papa, dear, I do dislike Mr. Dormer so much, and I'm not fond of any of those Oriel people. I cannot understand what Tristram sees in them.' But I'll tell you what I think, my boy," concluded the Rector mysteriously, "and that is, this dislike is a very hopeful sign."

"Why?" asked Tristram with gloom.

"Well, to begin with, Horatia, unlike most women, can generally discuss a subject impersonally, but in this matter she makes a personal application, and she always attacks your friend Dormer, when she might just as well select Mr. Newman or Mr. Froude. Why? Because I verily believe she is jealous of him!" And the Honourable and Reverend Stephen Grenville sat back in his chair to make the full effect of his words.

"You don't really think that she cares—that she could ever . . . ?"

"I don't know, my dear boy; I can't say. Perhaps

I oughtn't to raise your hopes. Horatia is a very extraordinary young woman. Sometimes I blame myself; I blame myself very severely. I gave her an education out of the common."

"You did everything that was right," interjected Tristram.

"I hope so, Tristram, I hope so. Did I ever tell you that her aunt once assured me she would either die an old maid or make a fool of herself? Well, I did my best. Your mother, Tristram, was very fond of my girl, and she told me more than once that she believed she had the makings of a fine woman. If she had been here now, she would have advised us; for I can't help feeling that we are at a parting of the ways. If we had had her help these last few years it might have been different. I have thought that you made a mistake in not trying again when you came back from abroad. Persistence sometimes works wonders."

"I cannot bear the idea of pestering a girl until she accepts an offer out of sheer weariness," said Tristram with some heat.

"No, I know, and I respect you, my dear fellow," said the Rector, looking at him affectionately. Continuing to look at him, he went on: "Of course, too, I have doubted whether I have been right to allow you to see so much of her. But sometimes I thought you were getting over it, and Horatia is so entirely at her ease with you that I feared to interrupt a friendship which I always hoped might become something else. But I believe it has been a strain on you, Tristram. I can see it all now, and it must not go on. It is not fair to you. How long is it since she refused you?"

"Five years. I asked her in 1825, the summer before my mother died."

"Well, well," said the Rector, sighing gently, "the sooner you try your luck again the better. The child strikes me as unsettled, and a little depressed perhaps. Anyhow, for your own sake, I do not think you ought to wait. I could wish that this young friend of yours were not coming, for it means that nothing can be done for a week or two. However, there is the autumn before you, and if Horatia won't have you, you will soon be taking Orders and wanting to settle down, and perhaps you will see someone else. You are not the sort of man to have to wait long for a living, and you will be lonely without a wife. If my girl is so foolish as to refuse you again, well——"

Tristram shook his head. "There is no 'well,' Mr. Grenville. It is Horatia or nobody for me."

CHAPTER III

One of Tristram Hungerford's earliest recollections was of the smell of sealskin, of its delicious softness, and of its singular utility, when rubbed the wrong way, as a medium for tracing the journeys of the children of Israel during Mr. Venn's long sermons in Clapham parish church. His Mamma, as he sat snuggled up against her, never reproved him for this ingenious use of her attire, and the stern, sad, greyhaired man, on the other side of her, could not see his small son's occupation, and would not have realised its significance if he had. For if at any given moment John Hungerford was not attending to Mr. Venn, he was thinking of the cause to which he had given his whole life and the greater part of his substance—the abolition of the slave-trade—thinking too, perhaps, of his English childhood, of his youth and young manhood spent in Barbados as manager to that very rich planter, his uncle, of his return to England a convinced champion of the freedom of the negro, his untiring labours to that end, in Parliament and out of it, his friendship with the like-minded group that held Wilberforce and Stephen, the Thorntons, Lord Teignmouth and Hannah More, and finally the meeting with Selina Heathcote, who now sat by his side, and the healing of that fierce loneliness which had cut the lines in his face that made people somewhat afraid of him.

Tristram, however, was not one of these persons, though he had early realised that Papa was not quite

the same on Sundays as on other days, connecting the fact with his known study of prophecy and with the puzzling distinction that was drawn between walking across the Common to church (which was permissible) and walking on the same portion of the earth's surface after church (which was not).

But, after all, Sunday (with its sealskin alleviations in winter) was soon over, and thereafter Tristram was free, with his special friends Robert Wilberforce, little John Venn, and Tom Macaulay, to play by the Mount Pond and to explore the mysteries of the Common, or, if it was wet, reinforced by other Wilberforces and Venns, to engage in endless games of hide and seek up and down the big house, with its spreading lawns and aged elms, to which, three years before the old century had run out, John Hungerford had brought his bride. Mrs. Hungerford's chief characteristic was a charity that knew no bounds, so that it was in her drawing-room that Mr. Venn propounded his novel scheme of district visiting, and in her spare bedrooms that the unfortunate African lads, who were being educated as an experiment at Mr. Graves's school on the Common, were nursed back to life after having nearly died of pneumonia. And on a day in May, 1800, Tristram had made his own appearance under its roof, and now he himself, clad in a blue coat with white collar and ruffles, attended that academy with his small friends.

Yet those earliest pictures of Evangelical Clapham, of his father pacing up and down the lawn under the elms in earnest talk with Mr. Wilberforce, of his mother smiling at her guests assembled round the great mahogany dining table (to meet, perhaps, Mrs. Hannah More or Mr. Gisborne of Yoxall, the famous preacher), were soon overlaid with others. In 1808 John Hungerford's

health, shaken by his exertions for the General Abolition Act of the previous year, began to cause anxiety. The doctors recommended change of scene, and air more bracing than that of Clapham village, suggesting a temporary retirement to the neighbourhood of the Sussex or the Berkshire Downs. Mrs. Hungerford having a distant relative in the latter county—the young wife of the Rector of Compton Regis—and a suitable house at Compton Parva, the next village, falling vacant, this house was bought, the Hungerfords intending to divide their time between Clapham and Berkshire.

But John Hungerford, worn out with his labours in the cause to which he had sacrificed everything, died a few months later, and Mrs. Hungerford, with her son, was left in circumstances considerably reduced. The large West Indian income reverted, on her husband's death, to other hands, and so the mansion at Clapham had to be sold, and the newly-acquired house at Compton became their permanent home. But at Compton, too, death had been busy, for the Rector was now a widower, almost inseparable from his baby girl. At Mrs. Hungerford's request he undertook to prepare Tristram for Eton. Herein he was carrying out her own wishes against those of her friends of the Common, who were inclined to regard public schools as nurseries of vice and Cambridge as the only tolerable University. Already Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Venn had urged tutors at home in preference to this scheme, and Mr. Zachary Macaulay had suggested that Tristram should accompany Tom to his private school in preparation for Cambridge. But all the Heathcotes from time immemorial had gone to Eton and Oxford, and Mrs. Hungerford, praying always against the spirit of worldliness, intended Tristram to follow the tradition.

And so for three years Tristram rode his pony to the Rectory, and learnt to write Latin verse, while Mrs. Hungerford did her best to counteract the Rector's educational plans for his little daughter. Disappointed in his hopes of a son, Mr. Grenville said that there was no reason why Horatia should not be as good a scholar as any boy, and to this end she was to begin Latin at five and Greek at six, and meanwhile he gave her everything she wanted. But before Horatia had mastered *Mensa, a table*, the white pony had ceased its visits to the Rectory, for its rider was in his first term at school.

Save for one thing, Eton did not bulk very large in Tristram's experience. He took with him there a questioning mind and a strong body. The first he soon learnt to disguise ; the second brought him the thing that counted, his friend. Fond of all games, he gave himself assiduously to rowing, a sport then rather winked at than formally recognised by the authorities, and towards the end of his fourth year had attained the position of a captain. When selecting a crew for the Boats of the Fourth of June, he happened to cast his eye on a delicate-looking boy of his own age, above him in class, whose brilliant but rather uncertain oarsmanship he had once or twice observed, and, though he rather doubted his staying power, resolved to include him. Nor, when he asked him to take an oar in the *Defiance*, and Dormer, flushing with pleasure, had accepted, stoutly denying the imputation that he was not strong, had Tristram any idea that he himself had just performed the most pregnant action, perhaps, of his life.

The Fourth of June came, and Tristram's recruit did not belie his promise, nor did he fail in the severer test of Election Saturday, when, amid fireworks and bell-ringing, the *Defiance* chased the *Mars* round and round

Windsor Eyot and finally bumped her. It was not, indeed, until they had landed that Tristram's well-earned triumph was somewhat dashed by the news that Number Four had fainted, and that they could not bring him to. He ran back to find that not all the Thames water which was being ladled over his unconscious comrade was having any effect, and, conscience-stricken, he picked him up and went off with him in search of more skilled assistance, divided between alarm, admiration for his pluck, and a certain protective sensation quite new to him. To the end of his life he was always to entertain for Charles Dormer somewhat similar feelings.

The result of it all was a verdict that the boy had slightly strained his heart and must pass a week in bed. The remorseful Tristram visited him daily, and thus, in talks more intimate than they could probably have compassed by other means, their friendship had its birth. Later, Tristram took Dormer home with him for the holidays, and the compassionate soul of Selina Hungerford was able to spend itself on the boy, who, she felt secretly sure, had never had a real mother.

The time came at last for Tristram to go up to Oxford. In the selection of a college Mrs. Hungerford accepted the choice of Mr. Grenville, who voted unhesitatingly for Oriel. Copleston, the Provost, he had known and admired since undergraduate days, and he had followed the ascent of Oriel, under Provost Eveleigh, towards her present pre-eminence. He had seen her choose her Fellows for their intellectual promise rather than for their social qualities, and he had seen her force upon a University content hitherto with a farce, a system of real examination for the B.A. degree. He had also seen (though without quite realising its import) the gradual formation of that group of Fellows called the Noetics,

who were products of the French Revolution though they were ignorant of the philosophy of the Continent, who, asking the why and the wherefore, pulled everything to pieces, and who had the temerity to apply even to religion itself the unfettered discussion meted out in Common Room to all subjects alike. Into this atmosphere of liberal thought the Rector was responsible for plunging the son of John Hungerford, born in the sacred village of Clapham, and destined by his parents for the ministry.

The son of John Hungerford, however, was the last to complain of his immersion, especially as his friend, too, was entered at Oriel. That questioning spirit, which he had learnt to disguise at Eton, now found a suitable soil and blossomed accordingly. Tristram had, moreover, the fortune to fall for instruction to the great Whately himself, the Noetic of the Noetics, the "White Bear," who treated his pupils rather like the host of dogs which he took with him on his walks round Christ Church meadows, throwing stones for them into the Cherwell. With his boisterous humanity, his disturbing habit of launching Socratic questions, his almost equally disturbing habit of imparting information lying full length on a sofa, he kept the minds of his disciples in a continual ferment, and when, as in Tristram's case, the critical faculty was already highly developed, the result was so stimulating that an apt pupil might very well pass even beyond the ideas of his master. Above all things, Whately hated shams; he repudiated all authority, whether of the Church or of tradition, and held that there was nothing which should not be submitted to reason. Yet, in an Erastian age, he upheld the freedom of the Church from the State, though he denounced the priesthood as an invasion of Christian

equality. He reduced dogma to a residuum, yet, for his able defence of that residuum, he might rank as a Christian apologist.

His views at first appealed very strongly to Tristram, who thought that he was going to be able to reconcile reason, religion, learning, and the general scheme of things. But after a while he discovered that this process was not so easy, and Dormer, the High Churchman, was responsible for making it harder still. And at the end of his time at Oxford he found his opinions in such a state of flux that he determined to postpone taking Orders. Mrs. Hungerford, rather to the surprise of the conscience-stricken Rector, put no pressure on her son, and a noble lord writing at this juncture in search of a tutor for his heir, Tristram was glad to accept the post.

Three years later, on his homeward way from the Continental tour which rounded off his time with his pupil, when choosing, at Brussels, a piece of lace for Horatia's approaching birthday (on which he had always given her a present), Tristram realised with a curious dismay that it was the eighteenth recurrence of this anniversary, that he had, of course, always intended to marry her, that applications for her hand might already have been made from other quarters—and accepted—and that he must get back at once. His charge was perhaps equally dismayed at the speed with which, next day, they resumed their homeward course.

They need not have hastened. If the disappointed lover had not been obliged to consider his mother's suddenly threatened health, it would have gone even harder with him than it did. She who had always tended now needed tending, and had her illness been voluntary her unrivalled instinct for consolation could not have hit upon a means more healing. Tristram took

her away to Hastings, and there, after eight months, she died.

Doubly as the place was now painful to him, Tristram returned to Compton. His loss, however, had this effect, that it made intercourse with the Rectory more easy of resumption. Having sufficient means and no definite object for his energies he was thrown back upon himself. He had neither the money nor the inclination to stand for Parliament. His father's passion for the interests of the negro had not descended to him, but more and more the crying need of the English poor was forcing itself upon his attention. He would have liked to be able to take Orders and to immerse himself in activities in some growing town. As it was he found a shadow of consolation in studying the problem of Poor Law reform. He even wrote a pamphlet, "A remedy for the present distress," and, as a justice of the peace, he was active in the emigration schemes then so popular as a means of remedying the mischief caused by the insane administration of the Poor Law. But every day seemed emptier than the last. He saw Horatia frequently, but, disguise it as he might, this privilege was not entirely pleasurable. He had lost the mother to whom he was devoted, and now the Gospel according to Whately was beginning to fail him. Slowly and bitterly it came to him that the "manly, reasonable, moderate, not too other-worldly faith and practice" which had once satisfied him had done so only because he was young, and because things were going well with him. When he went in to Oxford to see Dormer, now in Orders and Fellow of Oriel, he came across Whately more than once, and felt the chill that one feels in meeting a person the glamour of whose influence has departed.

But more and more he found himself a constant visitor

at Oriel, until, as a privileged person, he came to be almost included in the circle of Dormer's friends there. These, without, exception, belonged to the new Oriel school, who were in reaction from speculation to authority, and, like John Keble, their guide, boldly placed character above intellect. Dormer never argued with him now, yet, imperceptibly, the leaven worked. . . . In the end it was Tristram's own need and his feeling for the needs of others which made him able to cut himself away from all "liberal" trammels and to rank himself under the same banner with the friend who had waited long and patiently for such a change of mind. During the summer term of 1830 he told Dormer that there was now no reason why he should not be ordained.

He had told Dormer something else too—the something which he had been discussing this very evening with Mr. Grenville, the something which was engrossing his whole thoughts as he rode homewards under the infant moon—his intention of again asking Horatia to marry him. There had never been any other woman for him. He knew her very well; he was no stranger even to her faults—little flecks making more beautiful a beautiful flower, they seemed to him, for he had a profound belief in her, a sort of intuitive faith in the real, secret Horatia whom sometimes she seemed to delight in hiding up—the woman with a capacity for great things. And the more he knew her the more he desired her. The thought that, when the time seemed favourable, he was going to stake his happiness on another throw, shook him. It haunted his sleep that night in a harassing dream, relic of their conversation at supper, wherein he was feverishly trying to build up a dyke against a flood of water that poured and pushed upon it, and Horatia, dressed in the robes of the Provost of Oriel, was laughing

at him and telling him not to be absurd, for the water had to come. Then, with her garden trowel, she had herself made a little breach in the bank, and at that a smooth wave had slipped over and carried her away, still laughing ; and he woke, in a horror for which he could scarcely account, and lay wakeful till dawn.

CHAPTER IV

(1)

THERE was a certain day in the year the advent of which always imbued the Rector of Compton Regis with an irritability quite foreign to his nature. It was that Sunday, usually occurring somewhere between Lammas and Michaelmas, on which his conscience obliged him to preach a sermon on eternal punishment.

The Rector was not sound on Hell, and he knew it. Every year he sought miserably for some formula which should reconcile what he felt with what he believed, and he sat this afternoon at his study table surrounded by old discourses on the subject, running one hand distractedly through his thick grey hair while the other held the pen of an unready writer. Every now and then his gaze sought help from his beloved little cases of Romano-British coins, or from the backs of Camden and Dugdale, and once, leaving his uncongenial task, he got up and wistfully fingered his latest acquisition, the brass piece of Allectus, which lay waiting to be put in its place with its numismatical peers.

The Honourable and Reverend Stephen Grenville was one of those persons, abounding in these islands, whose theories and practice do not match. He stood, outwardly, for the union on equal terms of Church and State, but in his heart he really assigned to the former a different and a superior plane. His antiquarian leanings,

very plainly manifested in his study, were the cause alike of this inconsistency, and of the measure of sympathy which, despite himself, he accorded to the " Oriel young men " whose enthusiasm (a thing he feared and disliked) would, he considered, wear off in time, and whose attachment to the historical foundation of the Church commanded his entire approval.

Aristocrat and Tory, the best-born gentleman in the neighbourhood (and the least likely to lay stress on the fact), he was greatly respected, and with reason. No dissenting chapel reared its head in the parish, and there was not a single public-house. It was his custom to celebrate Holy Communion at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, and on the Sundays immediately following those feasts, and to baptise and catechise on Sunday afternoons. His reading in church was very impressive. He knew every one of his flock personally ; he endeavoured always to do his duty as he conceived it, else had he not now been struggling, poor gentleman, with an uncongenial topic. . . .

" Have you any letters for the carrier, dear ? " asked Horatia, putting her bonneted head in at the door. Sounds of impatient boundings and whimperings behind her hinted at an accompanying presence.

The Rector abandoned Hell for the moment. " There is the letter to your Aunt Julia, my love. I had to keep it back to make some inquiries about railroads . . . and then this sermon . . . Where have I put it ? " Rumpling his hair still more violently he reflected, and having searched among the litter on his table, found what he sought and gave it to his daughter.

" Try and have your sermon finished when I come back in an hour's time, there's a good Papa," suggested

Horatia, kissing him. "I am sure what you said last year would do quite well. I shall go round by Five-Acres and back by the road."

Outside the inn the Oxford carrier was just preparing to start, wrapped in an old many-caped coat, which had probably once adorned a greater luminary, some driver of the numerous London and Oxford coaches. Horatia gave him the letter, acknowledged the landlord's respectful greeting, and summoning her spaniel from some ravishing discovery in the yard, turned along the road.

Presently the carrier passed her, cracking his whip in emulation of the *Magnet* or the *Regulator*, and as she watched the lumbering covered cart dwindle gradually in the distance, Horatia found her mind following the odyssey of Aunt Julia's letter; saw it being trundled along the miles of road, past Kingston Bagpuize and Besselsleigh and down the long hill into Oxford; witnessed its transference next morning to the London coach at the *Angel*, and finally pictured the postman delivering it at Cavendish Square, and Aunt Julia receiving it at breakfast in the big, handsome, gloomy dining-room.

And because, not having any great love of that lady, she had seen little of Aunt Julia since her childhood, she instinctively imaged her as she had appeared in those days, with her smooth brown hair, her rich and smooth brown dress; and she saw, round the breakfast table, her eight cousins, all of the ages which were respectively theirs about the time of the battle of Salamanca. (Horatia herself was born in Trafalgar year, and owed her name to that fact.) Further, she recalled her never-forgotten and scarcely forgiven stay under Aunt Julia's roof at that epoch.

She was six or seven, and she had been deposited in

Aunt Julia's care on account of an epidemic at Compton. Her nurse did not accompany her. Mrs. Baird, a strict Evangelical, brought up her children very literally in the fear of the Lord, and she believed in "breaking a child's will." Yet she was kind and perfectly just, while her offspring were such models of good behaviour that it seemed now to Horatia as if this process could not have been painful to them. But the atmosphere of compulsory religion, which attained its apogee on Sunday, caused Horatia to look upon that day with a novel horror. Church in the morning, with a long string of little be-pantalooned worshippers setting out in double file towards Margaret Chapel, the two rearmost reciting to their father, during that short transit, verses and hymns: after church more verses and hymns, and then at three o'clock a heavy meal, at which all the children dined with their parents. The conversation was instructive. Uncle James never failed to quote with approval Mr. Wilberforce's application of the text in Proverbs about the dinner of herbs and the stalled ox, pointing out that his fortunate offspring enjoyed both the better meal and the blessings of affection. Afterwards there was more religious instruction, and family prayers, in the evening, of enormously swollen bulk. The first Sunday of her stay, Horatia bore these multiplied devotions because she was unaware, at any given moment, how much was still to follow. On the second Sunday she restrained herself until the evening. It was Aunt Julia's custom always to hear the prayers of the younger children; but when Horatia in her turn was bidden to kneel at that unyielding lap, she refused. She would not say any more prayers: God, she announced, with confidence, must be tired; He had been hearing them all day. And in this opinion she remained firm.

Only having suffered the mildest reproofs for wrong-doing, Horatia was not warned when the eulogy of the rod of correction taken from the Book of Proverbs was chosen for the nightly reading, but when the other children had been dismissed she suddenly experienced, at the lap she had scorned, the practical effect of the wise man's teaching. Yet Aunt Julia, though she had not spared for her crying, suffered defeat, for Horatia did not say her prayers, and her visit was shortly afterwards terminated lest she should contaminate the other children. Aunt Julia indeed offered to undertake a course of " bringing the child to her senses " at some future date, but the Rector declined the proposal, nor did Horatia visit again in Cavendish Square until she was nearly grown up. It was many a day, too, before she could be coaxed by her father to resume the practice of prayer.

Aunt Julia's hair was not so brown now, and of the eight daughters five were prosperously married. Horatia knew that none of them considered herself to have had a childhood other than happy. Perhaps it was a good preparation for the state of matrimony, to have your " will broken " early in life. If so, how far was she herself from possessing that desired qualification !

Horatia smiled at the thought as she walked along. Since the death of the mother whom she could not remember, and the extinction of the hope of a son (for Mr. Grenville had a feeling against second marriages), she had been to her father almost everything that a son could have been—with the added advantage that she was never obliged to leave him. Latin and Greek and ancient history had been laid open to her as to a boy ; she was able to take an interest in the Rector's antiquarian pursuits, and could have abstracted passages from the Fathers for him if he had wanted them. All

this Mr. Grenville had taught her himself, turning a deaf ear to family representations on the necessity of a governess, the use of the globes, and deportment. Music and Italian masters, however, visited the Rectory from time to time, imparting knowledge when their pupil was in the mood to receive it, but it was to the old émigré priest settled at East Hendred, whom she loved, that she owed her remarkably good knowledge and pronunciation of French, and her interest in the history of his native land. For after all Horatia was not a typical classical scholar; her acquaintance with Greek and Latin authors was by no means extensive, and need not so much have alarmed her neighbours.

(2)

Decidedly it would, after all, soon be autumn in earnest. Only five days ago, when she was in the garden among the flowers, Horatia had scouted the thought, but there was less of summer here. Farmer Wilson's beeches were actually beginning to turn. There was a tiny trail of leaves along the side of Narrow Lane, as she could see by glancing down it. The high road, less overshadowed, was clearer of these evidences of mortality. How blue was the line of the Downs!

A horseman overtook her, riding fast, and raising his hat as he passed, but without looking at her. It was no one that she knew, yet, a good rider herself, Horatia instinctively remarked his ease and grace, his perfect seat. He was taking the same road as she, but long before she got to the turn he had disappeared round it; and indeed she had forgotten him even sooner, for Rover the spaniel suddenly went delirious over a hedgehog which he just then discovered, and which he had

to be coerced into leaving behind. Horatia was still praising and scolding her dog when she got to the turn —and when the sound of loud screaming ahead caused her to hasten her steps.

By the side of the road, a little way down, was a group composed of the gentleman who had passed her, his horse, and a small child in a pinafore. From this infant, seated upon the border of grass, proceeded the loud wails which Horatia had heard; the rider, one buck-skinned knee upon the ground, was stooping over it and addressing it in tones that, as Horatia came nearer, sounded alternately anxious and coaxing.

"It is Tommy Wilson," thought Miss Grenville aghast. "He is always playing in the road, and now he's been ridden over. . . . But it can't be serious, or he would not be able to yell like that." Nevertheless she hastened still more. The gentleman, absorbed in his blandishments, did not hear her.

"Leetle boy," she heard him say—"leetle boy, you are not hurt, not the least in the world. You are frightened, soit, but you are not hurt. See, here is a crown"—the yells ceased for a moment—"now rise and go to your home. Quoi! you cannot stand upon your feet?" For he had lifted the infant to a standing posture, which it instantly abandoned, falling this time prone upon the ground, and emitting now perfect shrieks of rage or terror.

"Dieu! a-t-il des poumons!" exclaimed the young man despairingly to himself. He made a gesture and rose; at the same instant heard Horatia's step and, turning round, snatched off his hat. His mien implored the succour which she would have rendered in any case.

"Is the child really hurt, Sir?" she asked. As well

pretend that she took him for an Englishman, since he spoke the tongue so readily !

" Mademoiselle," said the young man dramatically, " I swear to you that my horse never passed within a foot of him. But he runs across the road in front of me, and falls down ; I dismount and pick him up—what else could I do ?—and since that time he ceases not to yell comme un démon ! "

His brilliant, speaking dark-blue eyes rested on her with a mixture of humour, appeal, and (it was impossible not to recognise it) of admiration. His black silk cravat was so high that his chin creased it ; his chamois-coloured cashmere waistcoat was fastened with buttons of chased gold, and the cut of his greenish-bronze coat testified to an ultra-fashionable tailor. Horatia looked at Tommy Wilson, now rolling on the grass in a perfect luxury of woe. Bending over him she seized him firmly by the arm.

" Tommy," she commanded, " get up ! " More successful than the Frenchman, she restored him to some measure of equilibrium. " Now you are coming with me to the doctor to show him where you are hurt. Come along ! "

Her voice, which he knew, had the effect of reducing the youth's lamentations, but at her suggestion a fresh tide of alarm swept over his round, smeared face. He resisted, ejaculating hoarsely : " No, Miss ! No, Miss 'Ratia ! No, I 'ont ! "

" Very well then, I shall bring the doctor to you here," said Miss Grenville firmly. " Now mind, Tommy, that you stay where you are without moving till I come back with him. Do you hear ? " She loosed her hold and stood back, holding up a warning finger.

A success almost startling rewarded her manœuvre.

For five seconds, perhaps, Thomas Wilson stood blinking at her through his tears, his mouth working woefully at the corners; then, with an expression of forlorn determination, he turned, ran past the horse, and set off to trot home at a pace which dispelled the least suspicion of injury.

CHAPTER V

(1)

Both Horatia and the stranger whom she had befriended looked after the small vanishing figure with an amused relief; then the young man turned, and, clasping his hat to his breast (for he was still bareheaded), made her a graceful, formal bow.

"Mademoiselle, I am your debtor to my dying day! Conceive how I am alarmed by that so evil boy! Ma foi, I began to see myself in an English prison for attempted murder."

"Mr. Hungerford would soon have effected your release, Monsieur," said Horatia, laughing. "May I ask, indeed, why he has left you to these adventures?" For she would no longer pretend ignorance of his identity.

The young man showed a marked surprise. "Is it possible that I have the good fortune to be known to you?" he exclaimed. "But yes; I am the guest of Mr. Hungerford, and, to make a clean breast of my sins, Mademoiselle, I have lost him. He was taking me to pay a call upon M. le Recteur of Compton Regis, and his daughter—cousins of Mr. Hungerford, I believe—we parted half an hour ago, and I was to meet him at some place whose name I have forgotten; then I have the contretemps with the infant and have lost the way also. I am in despair, because I have it in my mind that the

cousine of Mr. Hungerford is une très belle personne, and her father very instructed; and who knows now whether I shall ever see them?"

His air of regret and helplessness was rather attractive; but the suspicion that he really had more than half an inkling who she was restored to Miss Grenville's voice and manner something of the decorum proper to the chance meeting of a young lady with a strange gentleman on the road—a decorum already a good deal impaired by the feeling of complicity in the business of Tommy Wilson.

"I have no doubt," she said, "that you will find Mr. Hungerford already at the Rectory, and I will direct you the shortest way thither. I am myself Miss Grenville."

M. le Comte de la Roche-Guyon smote himself lightly on the breast. "I might have guessed it!" he said in an aside to Tristram's horse. "Mademoiselle, I am more than ever your devoted servant . . . Permit me!" He kissed her gloved hand with a singular mixture of reverence and fervour. "But . . . if we are going the same way . . . might I not have the great honour of accompanying you, or would it not be considered convenable, in England?"

His tone, his innocent, pleading glance suggested that in his own less conventional native land such a proceeding would be perfectly proper; whereas Horatia knew the exact contrary to be the case. However, she always thought that she despised convention; there was the chance that he might get lost again, and meanwhile poor Tristram would be waiting about Heaven knew where. So she said, with sufficient dignity, that she should be very pleased, and they started homewards, conversing with great propriety on such banal subjects as the weather, and with Tristram's horse pacing beside them

for chaperon. Yet the shade of Tommy Wilson, hovering cherub-like above them, linked them in a half-guilty alliance.

And thus they came round by Five-Acres into Compton Regis, and at the cross-roads by the farm found Tristram Hungerford, on his old horse, looking for his missing guest.

"My dear La Roche-Guyon, where have you been?" he demanded, as he dismounted and saluted Horatia.

"In Paradise," responded the young man audaciously. "Eh quoi, you were anxious about me, mon ami? I found a guardian angel in the person of Miss Grenville herself."

"So I see," answered his host a trifle drily. "I rode back to Risley to look for you."

The Comte protested that he was desolated, at the same time managing to convey to the girl beside him, without either speech or look, that, for obvious reasons, he was nothing of the sort. But Miss Grenville, with a heightened colour, walked on in silence between them. She had no taste for exaggerated compliments; that foolish utterance about Paradise would not have been at all in good taste for an Englishman. But, of course, M. de la Roche-Guyon was a foreigner.

She had yet to learn that M. de la Roche-Guyon, born and partially educated as he had been in England, had a much less incomplete knowledge of English usage than he found convenient, at times, to publish abroad.

(2)

Armand-Maurice de la Roche-Guyon achieved, in the Rectory drawing-room, the impression which he never failed to make in any society. Man or woman, you

wanted instinctively to be friends with him ; he had so engaging an air of expecting it. And Horatia noticed afresh how intensely he was alive, and how little he tried to conceal the fact. She thought of the wooden, controlled visages of some of her male acquaintances, and contrasted them with his changing, vivid face, in which every feature, from the clear eyebrows to the rather mocking mouth, could express any shade of feeling from derision to adoration. Such foreign accent as he retained lent a charm to his fluent English, which, though apt to desert him at moments of crisis, carried him gallantly in ordinary conversation, and only required occasional help from a gesture or a French word. But, as he explained, he had been born in England, and therefore the English "th," the shibboleth of his countrymen, troubled him but little.

"M. l'Abbé Dubayet, who taught my daughter, never learnt our language properly, though he had been in England for a quarter of a century," remarked the Rector, commenting on his visitor's proficiency.

"So much the better for Mademoiselle, who speaks, I will wager, like a Touraingelle," responded the young Frenchman, with a little bow in Horatia's direction.

"Yes, she does speak well," said the Rector.

"Her friends complain, I believe, that they cannot follow her on that account," murmured Tristram.

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Horatia. "Do not think to flatter me into talking French with M. de la Roche-Guyon. I shall ask him the inevitable question in English : How do you like England, Monsieur?"

"Mais, mon Dieu!" exclaimed the guest, "how am I to reply to that? If you mean the country, Mademoiselle, it is not new to me ; if you mean John Bull, it would not be polite of me to tell you how much he

sometimes amuses me ; if you mean the English ladies, you would think what I should say too polite, and you would not believe me."

" We had better let you off, La Roche-Guyon," said Tristram. " Far be it from us to ask why John Bull amuses you."

" You have seen Oxford, I suppose, Monsieur ? " inquired the Rector.

" Already twice," responded M. de la Roche-Guyon. " I find it beautiful—but of a beauty ! We have nothing like it ; it must be the wonder of the world, your University. Fortunate young men, to live in those magnificent colleges, and disport themselves on those lawns ! I saw there—what did I not see ? all the colleges, I think, certainly that of Oriel, the nurse of Mr. Hungerford—and the theatre, with those heads of Roman Emperors (but, indeed, I hope they were not really like that), and the great library, superb, and a museum—I have forgotten its name, where there was a jewel of Alfred, and the sword sent by the Pope to your Henry VIII—he would not send one, I think, to William IV ?—and a horn which grew upon the head of a woman (but that I do not believe, naturally) and a picture of the Christ carrying the cross made in the feathers of the humming-bird. Yes, and I also saw in the library, I think, a model of our Maison Carrée at Nîmes. But it is the whole city, with its towers and gardens, which has most ravished me."

" Ah, do you take an interest in Roman remains ? " queried the Rector, brightening. " We can't show you another Maison Carrée of course, but there is a very fair Roman villa between here and Oxford, with a Roman cemetery near it. Then there is Cherbury Camp, not far from us—though that is probably pre-Roman, if not

pre-British ; it is egg-shaped, and has three valla, with fosses outside each—very interesting. I should have great pleasure in showing it to you, Monsieur, if you cared to see it."

" I am sure that M. le Comte will not care for that, Papa," interposed Horatia. " I assure you, Monsieur, it is nothing but a few grassy banks, all ploughed away except in one place. Imagination supplies the rest."

" And what, Miss, supplies the Roman coins in my study, from Augustus to Honorius, all found in this county ? " demanded her father. " And the cameo of Hermes with a cornucopia, and the very Anglo-Saxon fibula you are wearing at this moment, ungrateful girl ! "

" You have found these things ! " exclaimed the young Frenchman eagerly, and his quick glance went to Horatia's neck. " De grâce, Monsieur, permit me to avail myself of your so kind offer ! I have always desired to behold the traces of our conquerors and yours. What a people, the Romans ! "

The Rector, delighted at this responsive enthusiasm, said that he would certainly conduct the visitor to Cherbury Camp next morning, and was warmly thanked for his offer. Tristram, though a little surprised at his guest's unexpected antiquarian zeal, was not ill-pleased at the arrangement, for he had an article to finish. Miss Grenville, however, continued to oppose her father's selection.

" I have a much better idea than that," she announced. " Take M. de la Roche-Guyon to see the White Horse, Papa."

" The White Horse, what is that ? " inquired the young man. " An old inn ? "

" It is a horse cut in the hillside by the Anglo-Saxons,"

Horatia informed him. "It is said to have been made by command of Alfred to commemorate his victory over the Danes. Papa does not believe that theory, as everyone else does. But he will no doubt explain his heretical ideas to you if you go with him to-morrow. At any rate, you will get a magnificent view, and see something you have not the like of, I suppose, in France."

"But pardon," retorted the Frenchman, "in France we have the white horse of M. de Lafayette, and that is already an animal—how do you say, légendaire; and some day perhaps he will be laid out as a bed in the gardens of the Tuileries. Oh, la belle idée!"

Horatia laughed. But the mention of Lafayette reminded her of recent events.

"You were in the revolution, perhaps, Monsieur?"

The young man's face darkened. "How do you mean, 'in it,' Mademoiselle? You do not think that I am one of those scoundrelly revolutionaries?"

"No, indeed! But you saw it—you fought in it, perhaps?"

The Comte de la Roche-Guyon shrugged his shoulders. "Yes, I fought a little. But I had bad luck."

What this misfortune was he did not specify. He did not seem to wish to talk about the Days of July, and Horatia liked him for it, feeling sure that the long white seam which she suddenly espied on the back of his right hand was an honourable memento of the occasion, and not realising that the age of so well-healed a wound must be nearer two years than two months.

"Ah, a sad business," said Mr. Grenville sympathetically. "And you have just come from Lulworth, I understand. How did you find the King?"

"His Majesty is lodged tant bien que mal," responded their visitor. "The Castle is out of repair and there

is little state. The day before I left I saw Madame la Dauphine and her lady driving out in the rain in a shabby little open carriage drawn by a rough pony. They both had old straw bonnets and Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême a light brown shawl. I believe that they were one day taken for servants, for housekeepers, at a neighbouring château which they went to visit."

"What unparalleled misfortunes have been hers!" said the Rector. "And the Duchesse de Berry?"

"Ah, she finds it too dull there; she goes visiting. Madame la Duchesse de Berry will not stop at anything; she has the spirit of an Amazon. My father tells me that on the way from Paris to Cherbourg she went armed with pistols, and fired them off once, too, in the King's presence. His Majesty was much annoyed."

"It is her little son, is it not, who is the heir to the crown?" asked Horatia. "How old is he?"

"Henry V is this month ten years old," responded the Comte.

"Britwell-Prior in Oxfordshire belongs to the Welds of Lulworth," said the Rector musingly. "Oh, are you going, Tristram? Well, mind that you spare me M. de la Roche-Guyon to-morrow morning. I will be . . . let me see—yes, I will be at the cross-roads at half-past ten, if he will join me there, and we will go to the White Horse, if Robin, who is really getting very fat, will carry me up the hill. And when shall I see you again?"

"At the Squire's on Saturday, I expect," said Tristram, adding that he hoped himself to get up a little dinner-party next week, if he could persuade M. de la Roche-Guyon to stay. He was beginning to take his leave when Horatia interrupted him.

"Before you go, Tristram, I want to show you this

book which I picked up in Oxford before I went away. Excuse me, M. le Comte."

It is to be presumed that M. le Comte excused her, no other course being open to him, but he bent interested eyes upon her as she and Tristram stooped over the book together, eyes which had already opened wider than their wont when he first heard the mutual use of the Christian name.

"Pardon," he observed in a low voice to the Rector, "but Mademoiselle your daughter and Mr. Hungerford are par—relations, I should say?"

"A sort of cousins," replied Mr. Grenville. "Moreover Tristram Hungerford is almost a son to me—an old pupil whom I have known since he was a child." And wishing further to disarm possible foreign criticism, he added, "Our English girls have much more liberty than yours in France, you know."

"For that reason I have always wished to be an Englishman," was M. de la Roche-Guyon's reply to this.

"Your Miss Grenville is very pretty, to my mind," he observed to his host as they rode homewards some twenty minutes later. "Has she many admirers?"

Mr. Hungerford thought this question decidedly impertinent—especially as he could not answer it in the affirmative—but remembering, like Horatia, that the speaker was a foreigner, abstained from an attempt to snub him. He answered a little stiffly:

"Miss Grenville is not concerned to see every man at her feet."

"So I supposed," returned the young Frenchman. "She is docte, instruite. Nevertheless——" he broke off and shot a long, keen and rather malicious glance at

Tristram's profile—"nevertheless, some day she will find it quite an amusing game. They all do, in the end."

Tristram pulled out his watch. "Shall we trot a little?" he suggested pleasantly. "It is later than I thought."

CHAPTER VI

(1)

"BUT . . . mille pardons . . . it is not very resembling—it is not much like a horse," said M. le Comte de la Roche-Guyon a little doubtfully.

The wind of the Berkshire Downs blew through his dark hair as he stood, hat on hip, one hand at his chin, and looked down on the strange beast stretched at his feet on the chalky hillside turf.

"It is not," confessed the Rector, holding on to his hat. "For one thing the tail seems longer than the legs, does it not? (The whole thing, I must tell you, is three hundred and seventy-four feet long, and covers an acre of ground.) And yet the form of the horse's figure as represented on ancient British coins is known to be a debased copy of the elegant animals on the pieces struck by Philip of Macedon. And that is one reason why I take the Horse to be of far older origin than the victory of Ashdown in 871 which it is supposed to commemorate. I take it to be of British, not of Saxon, times."

"Really!" murmured his audience.

"Yes," said Mr. Grenville with growing impressiveness, "it is to me certain that the ceremonies connected with the quinquennial scouring of the Horse, of which I will tell you presently, are religious in origin." And he expanded this theory.

If M. de la Roche-Guyon (as is highly probable) was supremely indifferent to date and origin, and unmoved by the thought of the ancient race to whom the Rector attributed the execution of the chalk steed, he concealed it well. Considering that he was quite ignorant of the pre-Conquest history of England his questions were remarkably intelligent, and Mr. Grenville thoroughly enjoyed his own exposition.

"Well, we must be going," he said regretfully at last, and they went to the place where they had left their horses tethered a little lower down. The descent was steep and stony, and before they had gone very far the Frenchman pulled up with apologies; he feared that his horse, or rather Mr. Hungerford's, had a stone in its shoe. Mr. Grenville whiled away the delay by speaking of the very fine neolithic celt which he had found at his favourite Cherbury, nor did it occur to him that the young man tinkering at his horse's foot had not the remotest idea of what a celt might be. On the contrary, the Comte smiled very pleasantly as he remounted, and congratulated Mr. Grenville on possessing this object. The Rector agreed that he was lucky.

"It is fifteen years ago since I found it," he mused, "but I remember my excitement as if it were yesterday. I must show it to you when we get back—for, of course, Hungerford understands that you are returning to luncheon with me?—Hold up, Robin! I should like also to show you my coins."

M. de la Roche-Guyon, it appeared, asked nothing better, and they proceeded in the September sunshine. They were within a mile of Compton when the Rector suddenly checked his fat cob.

"I believe, M. le Comte, that your horse is losing a shoe. Hungerford's man must be very careless, for I

happen to know that the beast was shod only last week. Or perhaps it was that stone ? Fortunately we are only a little way from home."

Once again the young man dismounted. " It is true," he said. " It must have been the stone. What a nuisance ! " The Rector could not see him biting his lips to hide a smile, nor hear him mutter " Peste ! It was not necessary, after all ! "

" It does not in the least resemble the horse of M. de Lafayette," he assured Horatia at luncheon, a meal which passed off with much gaiety, but at the conclusion of which the Rector spoke again of his coins and the famous celt. Horatia, though she could not bring herself to believe the vivacious young Frenchman really interested in the contents of Berkshire tumuli, had not the heart to try to prevent her father from bringing out his treasures, and she watched M. de la Roche-Guyon being borne off to the study with mingled amusement and compassion. It was his own fault after all ; and she was sure that Papa could not keep him long—because he still had not finished that sermon.

Half an hour later, sitting with some embroidery on the lawn, she knew that the Rector must have returned to his task, for she beheld the Comte to issue alone from the house.

" M. le Recteur permits that I make my adieux," he said as he came towards her. " Will Mademoiselle permit it also ? "

Horatia laid down her work. " Pray do not hurry away, Monsieur. Papa has his sermon to finish, and I, as you see, have no serious occupation. Will you not sit down for a little ? "

The young Frenchman complied readily enough. His

glance went round the garden, over the phloxes and sunflowers, rested a moment on a book lying on the grass, and came back to Horatia. He gave a little, half-checked sigh.

"You cannot think, Mademoiselle," he said after a moment's silence, "how delightful it is for an exile like myself to be admitted again into the intimacy of home life. Not only is it beautiful and touching, but it is unexpected; for in France we are told that you have no life of the family to be compared with ours; and I have been used . . . in the past . . . to so much."

His voice dropped, and he looked down.

"We think, in England, that we have much of it too," said Horatia rather softly. "But—an exile—why do you call yourself that, Monsieur le Comte? Surely you are returning to France?"

The young man raised his eyes, blue and laughing no longer. "Ah, yes, Mademoiselle," he said with meaning, "my body returns indeed, but my heart remains behind . . . at Lulworth, with my King, with my father who is privileged to be, for his sake, an exile in body as well. I go back to my home in Paris, where my father's place will be for ever vacant; I go back to take up my life of yesterday, to meet my friends, to laugh, to talk, and . . . if Heaven grant it, to plot for Henry V. That is all I can do. . . . Yes, I go back, but I am no less an exile, though in my native land. Surely you, Mademoiselle, can understand that?"

Horatia bent her head over her embroidery. "Yes, I think I understand," she said. But she was puzzled; the people she knew did not talk like this.

"Eh bien!" went on Armand de la Roche-Guyon more lightly, "it is Fate. Our house has served the Lilies for a thousand years, and I suppose the time has

come to die with them. You can understand that too, you whose ancestors fought for the Stuarts."

None of Miss Grenville's ancestors—persons distinctly Hanoverian in sympathy—had ever supported that romantic cause, but for the moment, moved by the voice, she almost believed that they had.

"But Louis-Philippe is a Bourbon," she suggested. "You would not——"

"Serve the son of Egalité!" exclaimed the Comte. "Serve the man who has usurped the throne of France! Sooner would I die!—— But I do not wish to talk of my affairs. Tell me of yourself, Mademoiselle, of your life here. It is vain that you try to disguise from me that you surpass other women in intellect and character as you surpass them—pardon me that I say it—in beauty. Chez nous, that superiority is recognised; but with you, is it not, you must hide it from people that you do not frighten them by your attainments. But we Frenchmen understand."

His tone and manner were perfect; grave, respectful, sympathetic, quite without commonplace gallantry. Horatia was amazed at his penetration.

"You are quite right," she said, laying down her work. "It is very ridiculous that my small accomplishments should have the effect of walling me off, as it were, from the rest of the world, but so it is. I am no cleverer than other girls, but, thanks to my kind father, I am better educated. You cannot imagine, M. le Comte, how that fact hampers me in ordinary life. When I stay with my cousins in Northamptonshire they think it a joke to introduce me as a 'bluestocking,' as one who knows Greek. Every man—every young man at least—that I meet is frightened of me, or pretends to be so, which is sillier still; every woman in her heart

dislikes me. I suppose they think that I am 'superior.'"

"Ah, the *women*, I can believe that," said Armand de la Roche-Guyon quickly. "But the men, no, that I can never understand; no Frenchman could understand it."

In a flash Horatia was aware how intimately she had been talking to him. But he went on:

"You should have been born a Frenchwoman, Mademoiselle. In Paris you would occupy your proper place, reigning at once by beauty and by wit, as only our women do."

Horatia coloured. "Do you then notice so much difference in England?" she asked, for the sake of saying something.

The young man cast up his eyes to heaven. "Mademoiselle, by the very disposition of the chairs in an English drawing-room after dinner one can see it! In a row on one side of the room are the ladies; in a row on the other the gentlemen, perhaps looking at them indeed, but more likely talking among themselves of hunting or of politics. Now with us how different! It is to the ladies that the hour of the drawing-room is consecrated; we pay them court, we cannot help it, it is in the blood with us. Besides, have they not great influence on the situation of a man of the world? But with you, suppose now that M. le mari is at his club, eating a dinner that lasts for hours, and that then he goes to the ballet at the Opera, and afterwards perhaps to supper, all this time his unfortunate spouse must shut her doors to visitors, and, for all amusement, may take a cup of tea tête-à-tête with his armchair—vous savez, c'est du barbarisme!"

He was quite excited, and it did not occur to Horatia,

amused and rather pleased, to wonder whether his indignation were on behalf of the excluded visitor or the secluded lady.

"You seem to know a great deal about it," she observed, smiling.

But M. de la Roche-Guyon here got up rather suddenly and said that he must be going. Horatia, could she have read his thoughts, might have reassured him, and told him that the sound he had heard was not the Rector opening the drawing-room window, with a view to sallying forth, but the garden gate, which was loose on the latch.

He had raised her hand in the graceful foreign fashion to his lips before she said, "But shall I not see you to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" said he with enthusiasm. "Do you tell me that you, Mademoiselle, will be at the dinner-party of the Squire to which I am told I am bidden?"

"Yes," said Miss Grenville. "And I shall be interested to observe whether, after dinner, you follow the English fashion or the French."

"After what you have told me, is there need to ask?"

Horatia went into the house singing. Something shining and vital seemed to have brushed against her in passing to-day.

(2)

The impression which Miss Grenville gained of M. de la Roche-Guyon at the Squire's dinner-party next day was that, though separated from her by the length of the table, many épergnes and piles of fruit, and though something monopolised by the ladies on either side of

him, he was always looking in her direction if she happened to glance in his. It gave her a curious and entirely novel sensation.

In the drawing-room afterwards all the ladies were loud in his praises. "So charming, and with such courtly manners—so distinguished, and O, so handsome! How interesting, too, that he should be a friend of Mr. Hungerford's—characters so totally unlike, and tastes too, one would imagine. But evidently the Count knows how to be all things to all men!"

Horatia, to whom this last remark was made, stiffened a little on Tristram's behalf. "I think it was very good of Mr. Hungerford to ask him to stay with him," she said, "for he is only an acquaintance. It is really M. de la Roche-Guyon's brother whom Mr. Hungerford knows."

When the gentlemen came in from the dining-room, rather earlier than they were expected, there was a knot of ladies in the centre of the room, of which, however, Horatia was not a part. Into this circle M. de la Roche-Guyon was immediately absorbed, and a buzz of laughter and conversation at once arose.

Tristram came over to Horatia smiling. "It's hopeless to get La Roche-Guyon out, but no doubt he is enjoying himself. I do not think his brother would be quite so much at home."

"Why?" asked Horatia with interest. "What is his brother like? Is he very different?"

"Quite," responded Tristram laconically, sitting down beside her.

"He is older, is he not?"

"Yes, by nearly twenty years, I should think."

"I can't imagine this M. de la Roche-Guyon twenty years older."

"You need not try. They are not in the least replicas of each other. Emmanuel de la Roche-Guyon was never like his brother, of that I am sure."

"It is sad for him to be practically an exile," observed Horatia.

Tristram merely looked at her, then at the laughing group in the middle of the room, and raised his eyebrows. Horatia smiled in spite of herself.

"I see what you mean. Well, I will bestow my sympathy better. It is sad for the Duke to be in exile at Lulworth, with Charles X."

Tristram lowered his voice. "My dear Horatia, there are compensations even in banishment. Imagine living under the same roof with all the relatives you ever had —with, say, your great-grandmother, your grandmother, all your great-aunts, your brothers, your nephews. . . . That is what the French generally mean by family life—a kind of hotel, with the additional drawback of knowing intimately all the other occupants. They have not our idea of the home that grows up round two people."

Once again Horatia was conscious of that new quality in Tristram's voice, once again she could disregard it, for before she had time to make a reply of any sort she perceived that the Comte de la Roche-Guyon was free, and was coming towards them.

"Ah, here you are!" said Tristram, getting up. "Take my place, and talk to Miss Grenville for a little." Going off, he crossed the room to speak to a neglected spinster in a corner.

M. de la Roche-Guyon sat down in his vacated place without more ado. He gave one glance round the room, and said, "Si nous causions un peu en français?"

His eyes, as dancing and daring as they had been sad

yesterday, challenged her to more than conversation in a foreign tongue. And something in Horatia's soul responded.

"Volontiers, Monsieur. What shall we talk about?"

The young man drew his chair a thought nearer. Conversation was rippling all around them; they were isolated in a sea of chatter.

"I will tell you a secret," he said. "I can tell you in French, but you must promise me to forget it in English."

"Very well, I promise."

"You remember, Mademoiselle, that we were late yesterday, M. votre père and I, because M. Hungerford's horse cast a shoe as we came back."

Horatia nodded.

"And how you blamed the groom of M. Hungerford or the blacksmith? Eh bien, I alone was to blame!"

Miss Grenville opened astonished eyes. "I do not understand you, Monsieur. You did not shoe the horse; and you did not make the shoe come off on purpose."

"Mais si, si, si!" reiterated the young Frenchman, his eyes sparkling. "*Peccavi nimis, cogitatione, verbo, et opere.* I loosened the nails before I left the hillside!"

"But why?"

"I am not sure that I dare tell you, after all! But you have promised me absolution. Eh bien, I wanted to make sure of . . . in other words, I thought I would force M. le Recteur to ask me to luncheon. . . . You are not annoyed?"

Certainly the emotion which shot through Miss Grenville, and which flew its flag in her cheeks was not annoyance. She did not know what it was.

"I should like to give M. Hungerford a golden horse-

shoe," proceeded the Comte, watching her. "It is true that I need not have——"

"Hush!" said Horatia, "Miss Bailey is going to sing."

In the centre of the room a very blonde lady in white was already displaying her arms to the harp, and her sister, similarly clad, shortly gave commands, in a rather shrill soprano, to light up the festal bower when the stars were gleaming deep, asserting that she had met the shock of the Paynim spears as the mountain meets the sun, but asseverating that naught to her were blood and tears, for her lovely bride was won.

Under cover of the applause which greeted this statement, Tristram made his way back to the couple.

"La Roche-Guyon, be prepared to emulate the songstress. Your fate will be upon you in a moment."

"Miséricorde!" exclaimed the young man, and at that moment, indeed, his hostess was seen to be bearing down upon him.

"M. le Comte, you will sing to us, will you not? Oh, I am sure you can sing without your music—you foreigners are so *gifted!* Do, pray, favour us!" And, other ladies joining in the request, M. le Comte, with none of the self-consciousness of an Englishman similarly placed, seated himself at the piano. "I shall sing to you, ladies," he announced after a moment's thought, "a little old song that was a favourite with Marie Antoinette."

The fair listeners prepared to be affected, expecting regrets for Trianon or sighs from the Temple. But M. de la Roche-Guyon broke into the gallant impertinence of *Joli Tambour*, and very well he sang it.

So the assembly heard that there was once a drummer boy returning from the wars, from whom, as he passed

under the palace window, the princess asked his rose, but that, when he demanded her hand in marriage, the king, her father, refused it, saying he was not rich enough. However, when Joli Tambour replied that he was "fils d'Angleterre," with three ships upon the sea, one full of gold, one of precious stones, and the third to take his love a-sailing, the king said that he might have his daughter. But Joli Tambour refused her, for there were fairer in his own land:

"Dans mon pays, y'en a de plus jolies,
Dans mon pays, y'en a de plus jolies,
Et ran, tan, plan!"

"Rather a slap in the face!" laughed a jolly dowager to Horatia. "The young man evidently wishes to intimate that he is not for marrying any of our daughters."

"Oh, surely he had no such motive!" returned Miss Grenville. "Besides——" she began, and stopped, for it had suddenly occurred to her that she did not really know whether he were married or not.

She had no further speech that evening with the singer, but he appeared, mysteriously and unnecessarily, to hand her into the carriage when it came round to the steps, though the master of the house was there for that purpose, and she had her father's assistance as well. But somehow, when it came to the point, it was the Frenchman who put her in.

"Thank you, thank you," said the Rector, as he shut the door. "I hope we shall see you again soon."

Armand de la Roche-Guyon bowed, and, stepping back into the circle of flickering light thrown downwards by the cressets at the foot of the steps, became for the second time that evening a disturbing picture.

CHAPTER VII

(1)

"AND so, my dear friends," said the Rector, "terrible as is the idea of the punishment reserved for the ungodly. . . . "

"Poor Papa!" thought Horatia, looking up out of the high Rectory pew at his handsome, kindly face, now clouded with the delivery of the sermon that cost him so much ingenuity.

But she was not listening very attentively. Her gaze wandered on and up to the huge Royal arms that rested on the beam over the chancel arch, over the "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness." What stories she had told herself about the unicorn once!

Beyond the top of the great three-decker pulpit there was not indeed much that she could see, except the little square carpeted room without a roof in which she sat, for since she had put away childish things she no longer stood upon the seat which ran round three of its four sides. But she knew exactly how the knees of the young men stuck through the railings of the gallery at the end of the church, how red and shiny were their faces, how plastered their Sunday hair. Moreover, she was sure that in the space behind them, occupied by the singers and players, William Bates was fidgetting with his flute, unscrewing it and putting it together again, and the bassoonist was going to sleep. "I can't

'elp it, your Reverence, I really can't ; seems as if there was something in this 'ere instrument," he was wont to plead. Horatia wondered whether he would awake before the end of the discourse.

And then, almost without knowing it, she found herself speculating upon what Tristram and his guest were doing. She had hoped (she put it to herself as "thought") that Tristram might have brought the latter over here. But, of course, the Comte de la Roche-Guyon was a Roman Catholic.

Her mind went back to last night. What an extraordinary knack he had of appearing in a different light every time she met him—he seemed to be almost a different person. She counted up the times. . . . It puzzled her, but she was by now beginning to realise that it interested her too. And what would he be like when he came to say good-bye ? The week for which she had understood him to be staying would be up next Wednesday, and Tristram would be sure to bring him over before that.

She wondered if he would ever come to England again. . . .

The Rector was beginning to descend from his eminence, the clerk below was clearing his throat before giving out "Thy dreadful anger, Lord, restrain, and spare a wretch forlorn"—the metrical version of the sixth Psalm—and of the end of the sermon Horatia had not heard a word.

(2)

In the course of a week it had become abundantly clear to Tristram Hungerford that the Comte de la Roche-Guyon, young as he was, had made a close study of the fair sex, if, indeed, he did not consider himself an

authority upon it. It was therefore without surprise, if without appreciation, that Tristram listened perforce, this Wednesday morning, to a dissertation on the subject. The two were on their way to Compton Rectory ; their horses had dropped to a walk, and under the bright, windy September sky the young Frenchman imparted to his host the fruit of ripe reflection on the dames of Britain.

" Every time that I am in England," he said, gesticulating with his riding-whip, " I am struck afresh with the curious—how do you call it—limitations of the English ladies. They have so much in their favour, and yet—pardon me that I say it—if you desire the fresh toilette, the graceful walk and gesture, ease in conversation, knowledge of coquetry, you must seek for them in France, for a real Englishwoman knows nothing of them."

" But I thought that our English ladies were supposed to model themselves nowadays on those of the Continent," objected Tristram, keeping the ball rolling out of politeness.

Armand de la Roche-Guyon nearly dropped his reins. " Mais, mon Dieu, that makes it worse ! " he exclaimed. " In a party of English ladies you can indeed observe that each has taken a hint from the Continent for her dress or her manner, and the result, ma foi, is often to make die of laughter. I have seen . . . but that would not interest you . . . Tenez, the way an Englishwoman sits down upon a chair, have you ever thought to remark that ? It is as if chance alone had caused her to fall there ! She sits down without paying the least attention to her dress. But the care with which a Frenchwoman places herself in an armchair, taking hold of her robe on either side, raising her arms

gently as a bird spreads its wings ! Even if she should be exhausted by laughing or half-fainting from emotion, still her dress will remain untumbled. It is worth remarking, I assure you ! "

Certainly these observations would never have occurred to Mr. Hungerford, and to judge by his expression, he had small wish even to make them vicariously. His companion was instantly aware of this.

" Forgive me, mon ami ! I see that you think it is not convenable that I should thus criticise your fair compatriots, whom, du reste, I admire from the bottom of my heart. And let me assure you that I have no criticisms for Miss Grenville ; she is perfection itself."

" You are very good," replied Tristram, without trying to suppress the irony of his tone.

The corners of the Comte's mouth twitched, and to Tristram's relief he touched up his horse for a sign that the subject was done with. As their hoofs rang sharply on the road the Englishman glanced once or twice at the clear profile beside him, stamped so visibly with the mark of race—and with what else ? That was the question. Armand seemed to him such a boy—but not an English boy. Well, he was very attractive, but——

As they were fastening up their horses outside the Rectory, the subject of these speculations suddenly said, with an air of great earnestness, " Mon ami, I wish you would explain to me one trait in the English character which I have never been able to understand. An Englishman is so haughty, he has such high notions of what befits a gentleman, and yet he will receive money from the man who has seduced his wife. If I had run away with the wife of an Englishman, *I* should expect to give him the chance of putting a bullet into me, but *he* would expect me to pay him in bank notes the value

of the lady—how one estimates that I know not. Can you solve me this problem of the English character ? "

Though the Rectory drawing-room was empty, Tristram did not attempt to elucidate this point, and his questioner, whose query was probably only rhetorical, sat and gazed with deep and silent attention at a picture of Daniel in the lions' den, worked in silks, which hung over the sofa. Then the door opened, and admitted the Rector, looking rather worried.

" Ah, M. de la Roche-Guyon, I am very glad to see you ! Tristram, this Otmoor business is disgraceful ! I hear there was a riot in Oxford on Monday night, and that the mob succeeded in releasing the prisoners."

" It is true," returned Tristram. " We were in Oxford on Monday evening, La Roche-Guyon and I, and saw it——"

" Saw it ! Well, was it as bad as I have heard ? "

" There was rather a scrimmage," admitted the young man. " The soldiers had no chance against the mob. St. Giles's Fair was on, of course, and it was in St. Giles that they rescued the Otmoor prisoners—about sixty of them—from the waggons."

" And what were the escort about, pray ? " demanded Mr. Grenville indignantly. " What were they, by the way ? "

" Oxfordshire Yeomanry. They held their own as well as they could, and had rather the advantage, as far as we could see, till they turned down Beaumont Street. Then the crowd got the better of them."

The Rector shrugged his shoulders. " I cannot conceive what you must think of us, M. le Comte," he said, turning to the Frenchman. " You will imagine that the reign of law and order is coming to an end in England."

" As in France," finished Armand good-humouredly.

" Ma foi, M. le Recteur, it has reminded me a little of the Days of July ; I own that I have not expected to see street fighting in England, and in a city so calm, so academic as Oxford ! But one never knows. There was one soldier—a sergeant I think—who ceased not to fight till he was disabled. The populace were fierce against him . . . It is strange, how John Bull loves not the military. I have remarked it before. (*These* observations are harmless, mon ami, is it not ?) John Bull thinks much more of the taxes which he pays to keep up the army than he does of military glory. That he calls *stuff*. Is not that so ? "

" What you say is profoundly true," answered Mr. Grenville, impressed ; but at that moment the door opened and Horatia came in.

An " Oh ! " of surprise escaped her, for she imagined the young Frenchman to have gone, and without taking leave.

" You are a ghost ! " she said to him, recovering herself. " I thought you were leaving us to-day."

Tristram broke in. " I have persuaded M. de la Roche-Guyon to stay till the beginning of next week, because I had the idea that he might care to go to the Charity Ball which Lady Carte is getting up on Monday, and also I thought of arranging my little dinner-party for this Saturday, if the date suits you and the Rector ? I know that it is all right for Dormer."

Miss Grenville looked at her father. " That will be charming. It will do excellently for us. May we ask if there is to be anyone else besides Mr. Dormer ? "

" Yes, I am going on now to ask the Edward Puseys ; they are still at Pusey with Lady Lucy, I believe."

" I think they must be," corroborated Horatia, " for I met him driving his wife over to call on the

Mainwarings two or three days ago. He did not look much as if he were thinking of what he was doing."

"I am glad that you are going to ask them, Tristram," commented the Rector, who had known the Pusey brothers since they were boys. "That young man's learning is stupendous. Too much was made, in my opinion, of his supposed sympathy with the new German theology, and I am glad that he did get the Chair of Hebrew."

"And I am glad too," added his daughter, "because they have such comfortable lodgings at Christ Church. I hope I shall stay there again some day. I like Mrs. Pusey, and it is so romantic to think that they waited ten years for each other, but I am rather frightened of him."

"Permit me to say that I don't believe you are really frightened of anybody in the world," observed Tristram smiling.

"Tristram, how can you say so! I am dust and ashes before Papa when he is really cross—and terrified of you, when you are in your conscience mood.—Is there anyone else?"

"We are short of ladies, and I thought it would interest M. de la Roche-Guyon to meet the Trenchards, who are staying just now with their aunt, so I shall ask her to come and bring them."

"Very nice," murmured the Rector. "Beautiful girls, if they are like their elder sisters—though, of course, none of them could ever compare with their step-sister, the French one."

Horatia turned to Armand, who had been sitting unusually silent. "Doesn't it flatter you, Monsieur, that Papa's ideal woman should be French?"

"Mademoiselle," returned the Comte instantly, with

an inclination, " our ideal women are always of another nationality than our own ! "

Tristram got up. " Well, we must be getting on, if that is settled, and you can both come on Saturday." M. de la Roche-Guyon also rose, very slowly.

" No, Tristram," interjected the Rector, laying hold of his arm, " you positively must stay ten minutes, because I've had this letter from Liverpool about James Stack and his wife emigrating to Canada. I had thought I should be able to get them off almost at once, but the shipping company say—there, you'd better see it." He fumbled in his pockets. " Horatia, suppose you take M. de la Roche-Guyon into the garden for five minutes."

Horatia was preceding the guest down the path when he said softly behind her : " There are advantages, after all, in Canada's having passed into English hands. As a Frenchman, I never expected to admit them."

" Why, what "—began Miss Grenville, stopping, and then suddenly finding his meaning quite clear. She coloured, was angry with herself, and tried to retrieve her slip by saying, " Papa has helped two or three of the parish to emigrate out there."

Armand was now walking beside her, along the line of flowers where autumn had begun to lay a hand in the week that had passed since he had sat there. But he showed no disposition to follow up his sally. On the contrary he looked rather moody, almost cross. It was a new phase. And after a moment or two he said, kicking a stone along the path :

" I am not looking forward to this dinner-party, Mademoiselle. Mr. Hungerford is too kind. What have you and I to do with these grave persons? *I* don't know Hebrew ! "

It was new to Horatia to be classed among the more frivolous portion of an assembly, and classed there by, and in conjunction with, a young man. "Ah, but you forget the Trenchard girls," she said lightly. "They do not know Hebrew either, and they are very pretty. Their mother is French; have you not heard about them?"

"Mr. Hungerford told me something, but I am afraid I did not listen; I was not interested."

"But you ought to be interested. It is rather romantic. Their mother, when she was quite young, was a lady-in-waiting to Madame Elisabeth. She fled to England, and her lover—who was a Frenchman, of course—fought through the Vendean war and came to England and married her. But next year he went back with the expedition to Quiberon, and was killed there. I can't remember his name. Then she married Mr. Trenchard, a Suffolk squire, and had several children, I think about eight—anyhow Trenchards have been staying here with Mrs. Willoughby, who is Mr. Trenchard's sister, ever since I can remember. And once I saw Mrs. Trenchard herself; somehow she did not look as if she had been through all those things as a girl."

Her hearer lent her sufficient interest, at any rate he was looking at her, a tiny frown between his dark eyebrows. "But you spoke of another daughter?"

"The child of the Vendean—born after his death, I believe. I never saw her. But Papa remembers her; more beautiful and gracious than one can possibly imagine, he says. She went into a convent in Rome."

M. de la Roche-Guyon said nothing, and having come to the end of the path Horatia stooped to a late rose in

the border. She was finding his evident ill-humour oddly disturbing.

"Let us speak of the ball on Monday—my last day," he said watching her. "How many dances will you vouchsafe me—in the cause of charity?"

And Miss Grenville, plucking the wet rose, found herself replying, to her no small amazement:

"That depends on Mr. Hungerford."

"Comment!" exclaimed the young Frenchman, stepping backwards. "Mais, juste ciel, il n'est pas votre fiancé!" His eyes blazed at her, and he had quite perceptibly paled; it was obvious that he was unaware of his lapse into his own tongue.

"Certainly not," replied Horatia with dignity. (She had been right about his eyes; they *could* look fury.) "But he is a very old friend and kinsman, and we always arrange to dance so many together."

Armand de la Roche-Guyon made a gesture, and smiled, quite sweetly. "I understand—mais parfaitement! Comme vous êtes femme . . . adorablement femme!" He touched her hand a second, and Tristram and the Rector came down the path.

CHAPTER VIII

(1)

Mr. Hungerford's little dinner-party had gone the way of all dinner-parties. The Rector had pronounced it, from his point of view, a decided success. "A most enjoyable evening, my dear," he said to Horatia, as they were driving home. "Whatever else that man Dormer of Oriel is or is not, he is a brilliant talker when he pleases. And I had a good talk with Edward Pusey afterwards in the drawing-room. The Arabic catalogue at the Bodleian is a colossal piece of work, but from what he told me I think his plans are too ambitious—not beyond his scholarship, mark you, but beyond his physical strength. He confessed to me that he sometimes almost envied the bricklayers whom he saw at work in the streets, the drudgery was so great."

"But Canon Pusey is a young man, and he needn't make Arabic catalogues unless he wants to," Horatia had responded rather unsympathetically. For she had not found the party so delightful. She had been taken in by Canon Pusey, and though Armand de la Roche-Guyon sat on her other hand, his partner, Miss Arabella Trenchard, had talked to him a great deal, and he had seemed to like it. It was quite natural, of course; he probably liked everybody, and Miss Trenchard was very pretty, much prettier than she herself; so that it was no wonder if M. de la Roche-Guyon had been by no means as bored as he had predicted. But, at all events,

he had found his way straight to her in the drawing-room afterwards, and chatted to her . . . till Mr. Dormer, showing a most unusual taste for her society, had come and made a third . . . and, to be quite just, had talked so delightfully that she almost forgave him the intrusion, at the time. Afterwards, it rankled increasingly.

But now it was Monday morning, the morning of the dance, and Horatia, in the drawing-room putting some asters into a bowl, was aware of being in a state of causeless and febrile excitement. She could not but ask herself what there was in a dance so to excite her; she was not a young girl any more; she had been to many such. Yet she was conscious that this ball was clothed in her imagination with the glamour of an untasted pleasure, and that the thought of it was like some splendid palace built on the edge of a precipice, beyond which there was nothing.

She had just carried the bowl to the mantel-shelf when, without warning, M. de la Roche-Guyon was announced to her. Horatia was startled, almost discomposed, and the vessel, which was "Wheatsheaf" Bow, narrowly escaped destruction.

"Mr. Hungerford sent me with a note," said the young Frenchman apologetically. "That is my excuse for deranging you so early, Mademoiselle; you must forgive me. It is about to-night."

She took the letter and read:

"My dear Horatia,—

"I am obliged to go into Oxford this evening to meet Mr. Rose, a man from Cambridge, at Dormer's rooms, and cannot possibly return in time for the Charity Ball; in fact I shall have to spend the night in Oxford. Would you and the Rector be so kind as

to consider M. de la Roche-Guyon as of your party? There is of course no need for him actually to accompany you. It is most unfortunate that this summons should have come just now, and that I must reluctantly forgo an evening to which I had looked forward with so much pleasure. I shall come to dinner, if I may, when I am at liberty, and make my apologies to you in person.—T. H."

Miss Grenville, on reading these lines, stamped her foot.

"How tiresome, O how tiresome! Why could not Tristram have gone to Oxford any other night!"

"You are sorry that Mr. Hungerford cannot come to the dance?" inquired the Comte, who seemed already acquainted with the purport of the note.

"Why, of course!" flashed Horatia, out of her burst of indignation. "Are you, then, glad of it, Monsieur?"

"In one sense, yes," replied M. de la Roche-Guyon coolly. "Because now I can ask for the dances of your kinsman as well as for my own."

Miss Grenville saw fit to take no notice of this sentiment, continuing along her own line of thought.

"How like Mr. Dormer! Everything must give way to what Mr. Dormer arranges and wishes. I have no patience with it—I am sure you do not like him either!"

"Mon Dieu, I should think I did not," replied the young man warmly, "considering that he spoilt my evening on Saturday! He might have left us that quarter of an hour in the drawing-room. I could almost believe that he did it on purpose. . . . No, Mr. Dormer does not amuse me."

"You have seen a good deal of him," said Horatia, restored to good humour, for she discerned a common feeling.

Armand made something of a grimace. "Mr. Hungerford has been kind enough to take me to see him twice. I do not like priests. They know too much."

"But Mr. Dormer is not a priest," returned Horatia, half amused.

"Well, perhaps not, mais il en a l'air, and he needs only the . . . what is it, la soutane?—the cassock, yes, and the sash that the delusion should be complete. Besides, he has the book."

"What book?" asked Horatia, mystified.

"The priest's book, the breviary. It was lying open on his table when we went in to see him at the college of Oriel. Almost I fancied myself chez Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon, my cousin."

"Oh, I understand!" said Horatia. "He is translating some of the hymns from the Paris Breviary—why, I don't know. I think I remember Tristram telling me about it in the spring. Mr. Dormer and several of the other Fellows at Oriel are what is known as High Church, and they are always doing queer things."

"High Church?" queried the young Frenchman, "what is that? And what queer things is it that they do?"

"Oh, it's so boring," said Miss Grenville wearily. "They think the Church of England is in danger; I don't know why, for it has gone on comfortably enough all these years without them. So they meet and talk a great deal about it—in fact, that is no doubt why Tristram has so tiresomely to go into Oxford this evening—fresh alarums and excursions, I expect. . . . Papa was very much shocked when he heard Mr. Froude say that the Reformation was a mistake, but when I told him afterwards that I thought they had better all turn Papists, and have done with it, he didn't

like that either . . . O forgive me! What have I said!" The colour rushed over her face. "I had forgotten for the moment; of course you are a Catholic yourself."

"But I had rather that you forgot it," exclaimed the young Frenchman, with an expressive gesture. "I am a Catholic, it is true, because—well, because one has to be. Royalism and the Church stand together; but I am not devout—pray do not think so!"

Horatia hastened to assure him that she had never suspected him of this, and they both laughed.

When he had gone she went upstairs and looked at the gown that she was to wear that night to dance in the palace which would crumble to ruins at daybreak.

(2)

The aching elbows of the fiddlers had several times been eased by surreptitious potations; the candles were beginning to gutter, chaperons' heads to nod sleepily. A light dust hung in the air from the action of so many pairs of twinkling feet upon the beeswax, and the Hon. and Rev. Stephen Grenville was distinctly conscious of a desire for his bed. Nor did the converse in which he was entangled with an elderly entomologist staying in the neighbourhood really reconcile him to sitting through so many quadrilles and country dances—to hearing selections from *La Gazza Ladra* give place to *Basque Roads*, *Der Freischütz* to *Drops of Brandy*. The Rector had no enthusiasm for lepidoptera, and he could by no means get the collector of beetles to listen to his own views on monoliths. Not inappropriately did the entomologist discourse of the butterflies of Berkshire, its obscurer moths, in this big room cleared for the

Charity Ball and full of a throng as bright and moving, but the scientific mind does not unbend to these analogies, and it might have been conjectured that he did not even see the fair guests had he not, during a waltz, suddenly inquired:

"Who is that extremely attractive young lady dancing with the French count—there, in yellow—a prodigious fine dancer?"

Probably one of the Trenchard girls, thought the Rector, and looked. But no! He pursed his lips. "That is my daughter," quoth he.

"Dear, dear," observed the entomologist, human after all, and he put on his glasses the better to observe the phenomenon. "My dear Mr. Grenville, I congratulate you, I do indeed. A most charming girl."

Flushed and smiling, Horatia whirled slowly past. No need to ask if she found her partner congenial. The Rector's eyes followed the couple, and it began to dawn upon him that he had been thus following them, unconsciously, a good many times that evening. Was this really so? Even as the question occurred to him, the Squire, beaming in his blue, gilt-buttoned evening coat, appeared on his other side.

"Hallo, Rector," he said cheerfully. "Going well, ain't it? That young French spark seems to be enjoying himself. They make a fine couple, eh?"

"Who do?" asked Mr. Grenville rather unwisely, as the golden dress came past again.

"Why, your girl and he, of course," said the Squire, with all the effect of a wink. "There they go. How would you like her as Madame de—what's the fellow's name?"

"Don't be ridiculous, Mainwaring," said the Rector rather tartly. "We have had to be civil to the young

man because he is Hungerford's friend, and no doubt he finds my girl, who speaks French well, is easy to get on with——"

"Yes, especially as his own English is so bad," retorted the Squire grinning. "Well, well, we're only young once. I remember when I first met my wife. . . . You're not thinking of going before it's over, Rector?"

Mr. Grenville put back his watch. "It is a good deal later than I thought. I told Dawes to be here at twelve o'clock."

No consciousness of eyes paternal, entomological or matronly was on Horatia during that last intoxicating waltz. She loved dancing, and she had danced a good deal, but never with a partner like this.

The music stopped (a little out of tune).

"Are you giddy?" asked Armand tenderly.

"A little," said Horatia, with truth. "It is so hot . . ."

He drew her hand a little further through his arm. "Here is a doorway. Where does it lead to? Voyons . . . ah, the library, and empty. Quelle chance! On est bien ici, n'est-ce pas? See, here is a chair; give me your fan."

But she would not sit down.

"I must go back to Papa."

"Not yet. He will have you all the days, and I have only these so few moments more of you."

"You are really leaving to-morrow?" asked Horatia in a conventional tone.

"Si fait. I return to Lulworth, and thence to Paris. And you will never think of me again."

Horatia did not answer this time, for she found she could not.

Armand stopped fanning. "I shall have only this to remember you by, for I mean to keep it," he said, looking down at the painted ivory in his hand. "Mais il suffira. Yes, I hear them, the violins; il faut s'en aller; il faut se dire adieu. . . . Nous ne danserons plus ensemble . . . Adieu, adieu, toute belle, adieu pour jamais!"

He crushed her hands fiercely to his lips. Her head whirled a second; then she tore them away.

"Please go . . . ask Papa to come and fetch me here . . . I will not go back into the room. . . ."

He looked at her strangely, almost wildly, but she would not meet his eyes. "Please go," she reiterated faintly, and Armand, suddenly dropping on one knee, put his lips to the hem of her dress—and was gone.

And loud through the strains of *The New-Rigged Ship*, now pouring under the archway, she heard the heartless marching beat of *Joli Tambour*.

"Dans mon pays, y'en a de plus jolies,
Dans mon pays, y'en a de plus jolies,
Et ran, tan, plan!"

Mr. Grenville hurried in almost immediately, his daughter's cloak on his arm. Horatia was lying back in a big leather chair. She looked curiously white, but roused at once.

"Is that my cloak? Thank you, Papa, very much. It is time to go, is it not, though it is not quite over."

"That is what I was thinking, my dear," said the Rector, putting the swansdown over her. "I believe we have been keeping Dawes waiting. Have you got everything—your gloves, your fan?"

"Everything I want, thank you, Papa."

The old fat horses and the careful Dawes did not devour the five miles that lay between them and home.

After a few desultory remarks, both father and daughter relapsed into silence, each in a corner of the barouche. But Horatia had drawn off her gloves, and in the darkness was pulling and twisting them into a rope, endeavouring to keep down the sobs which rose chokingly in her throat. Had anything in the world ever hurt like this? All the while the horses' hoofs beat out the refrain, relentless, and so horribly gay. "Et ran, tan, plan. Et ran, tan, plan!" With all her desperate fight for composure she only succeeded in keeping back the main violence of the storm; the smaller rain-clouds broke despite herself, and, quietly as she wept, the Rector was aware of it.

"My darling, what is it?" he said, putting out a hand to her.

"Nothing," replied Horatia, swallowing the tears. "I am tired . . . and stupid . . . I danced too much . . . "

("Dans mon pays y'en a de plus jolies,
Dans mon pays y'en a de plus jolies!")

"I thought you looked tired, my love," replied Mr. Grenville, exceedingly alarmed but (he hoped) tactful. "I heard one or two people saying that the floor was not good. Come, child, put your head here; perhaps you will be more comfortable; and we shall soon be home."

Whether or no he knew why she wept, Horatia could not resist the kind voice, and all the rest of the way her elaborately dressed head lay against her father's shoulder.

She kissed him silently when they got in. No, she did not want her maid. Again she repeated that she was only tired; she would be all right in the morning, and so went to her room.

Fool, fool, that he had been ! But what had happened? At any rate they had not come to an understanding ; that was obvious. And, thank God, the young man was going away to-morrow. But he could not bear to see her suffer. Twice he went and listened shamefacedly at her door ; she was sobbing, sobbing as if her heart would break—she who never cried ! At dawn, when the birds were twittering, he went again ; she was quiet. He prayed God she slept. It was more than he could do.

CHAPTER IX

THE Rector breakfasted alone next morning. Miss Horatia was very tired ; she might not be down till the afternoon ; she would sleep if she could. Recognising this as an indication that she did not wish for a visit from him, Mr. Grenville with a heavy heart tried, in succession, to tackle his next Sunday's sermon, to furbish up an old one, to read the violent article on Clerical Farmers in the last number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, to compose an answer to it, and to rearrange some of his coins. In the afternoon he had to attend a meeting of magistrates at a distance. He wondered if he should see Horatia before he started. Never before had a dance kept her in bed next morning.

Just as the gig came round for him she appeared, wearing a hat and carrying a basket. All traces of last night's emotion had vanished.

"Good morning, or rather, good afternoon, dear Papa," she said very cheerfully, kissing him. "Am I not late? But I was so tired last night. Where are you going to? Oh, I had forgotten. *I* am going to old Mrs. Dawes ; and if there are any blackberries ripe I shall take her some. She says they are good for the rheumatics. I don't believe her. Good-bye, darling. . . ."

The wheels of the gig grated on the drive, and Mr. Grenville turned round to wave a farewell, but without his usual smile. He looked worried, poor dear. How

could she best efface the memory of last night's self-betrayal from his mind? Obviously best by a cheerful, a very cheerful demeanour, such as she had already attempted. She had forgotten in truth that her father was going to this meeting; there was then no need for her to leave the house this afternoon—her motive in so doing being to gain a little respite before he should question her, as he very well might. But since she had told him that she was going, go she would. As well begin the usual life at once. Mrs. Dawes would detail her symptoms at length, and that would serve as a temporary distraction.

This indeed the old dame did with much thoroughness and repetition, after which she seemed disposed for general conversation.

"That there French count, Miss; a likely young gentleman, I hears; he be gone from these parts now, bain't he?"

"I believe so," said Horatia. "But you were telling me about your grandson?"

"John, he seed him riding droo the village on Mr. 'Ungerford's 'orse," pursued Mrs. Dawes, not to be turned aside. "He ride proper, John says; and he wur surprised fit to bust hisself, John wur."

"Why?"

"The Count being a foreigner, Miss, and a Papist. I don't hold with no foreigners; a bloody-minded set, I calls 'em. Look at that Bonyparty as cut off the 'eads of the King and Queen of France. I mind how the year that you was born, Miss 'Oratia . . ."

It was nearly six o'clock when Horatia emerged from Mrs. Dawes' cottage. She was surprised to find the invasion of twilight already begun, and an enormous

yellow moon looking at her through the tree-trunks. Yet she was in no haste to return home, but loitered along the road, picking a few blackberries as she went. One or two villagers passed her, and their evening salutations rang heartily on the still air. " Rector, he'll be having a rare treat to-morrow," was the comment of one, but Horatia overheard Whitehead, the smith, a melancholy personage, who passed at the same time, opine that, " them berries was mortal bad for the innards, and did get in atween a man's teeth like so much grit."

After him there was silence ; only a few far-away sounds from the village reached her. The grass at the edge of the road was already damp. It was time to return.

In the Rectory the lamps would be lighted ; her father would be back, and he, who always heard her step, would come out of his study and say, " Well, my dear, and how is Mrs. Dawes ? " It would be chilly enough to have a fire after supper, and she would sit with him, and talk to him ; or, if he had not finished his letters, she would go on with the last series of *The Tales of a Grandfather*. And Dash, on the hearthrug, would whimper in his sleep because he had dreams of rabbits which he never caught. . . .

And it would be the same to-morrow, and the next day. Once she had loved it—that other Horatia only a few days dead, who seemed so strange to her now, had chosen it. Now . . . how should she bear it ! how should she bear it !

She moved on very slowly. Strange, dim scents came out of the hedgerows ; a bird fluttered in an elder-bush. How early the moon was rising ! The sky just overhead seemed still the sky of day. It was pain, this peace and beauty . . . and it was not peace. The quiet country

lane, the pure, still sky, were all athrill with expectation.

Or was it she herself? But what had she to expect? Nothing—nothing again, for ever.

. . . So they had noticed how well he rode—foolish, oddly comforting reflection. She thought how he had passed her on Tristram's horse that afternoon—only a fortnight ago—how he had ridden into her life, and out of it again. That was a romantic phrase and delightful to read in a book, but in real life it had no glamour; the fact enshrined in it was too bitingly real. Unwanted, unsummoned, there came into her head—

"It was a' for our rightfu' King
We left fair Scotland's strand;
It was a' for our rightfu' King
We e'er saw Irish land,
My dear—
We e'er saw Irish land.

"He turn'd him right and round about
Upon the Irish shore;
And gae his bridle-reins a shake,
With, Adieu for evermore,
My dear—
With, Adieu for evermore!"

And on the heels of the lines, a mocking commentary, came floating Sir Walter's version—

"A lightsome eye, a soldier's mien,
A feather of the blue,
A doublet of the Lincoln green—
No more of me ye knew,
My Love!
No more of me ye knew!"

Yes, that was all she had known. . . . O, how foolish,

foolish she was—a silly sentimental girl of the kind that she most despised ! Yet, if only she had never seen him !

And at that moment Armand de la Roche-Guyon came round the corner of the road.

Horatia stood still, petrified. It was as if her thoughts had taken body, for he was gone—how could he be here . . . walking rapidly towards her like this, bareheaded—flesh and blood. Before her heart had recovered its broken pulsations he was up to her.

" What, are you not gone ? " she faltered.

" They told me you had walked this way," he said rapidly in his own tongue. " I have been to the Rectory ; you were not there. I could not go—mon Dieu, I could not go. . . . Give me your basket ; let us go back by the field path ; it is close here."

She gave him the basket without a word, suffocated by the tumult in her heart, and dominated by the change in him, by the ardour and purpose which radiated from him, making him seem taller and even more desirable. He had the air of a young conqueror ; but he was unsmiling, which was rare. Now she knew what the night had been trying to tell her. . . .

They came in a moment to the gap in the hedge, by the oak-tree, an unauthorised way of attaining the field-path. It seemed right that he should know of it, though little less than a miracle. He held aside the twigs and brambles so that she could pass. And when she had stepped through everything was clear to her, and she knew that in entering the shorn September field, lit with its low yellow moon, she had come into another country, dazzlingly strange, but her inheritance, her home. She half turned, and was caught in Armand's arms, her lips to his ; and thus, beneath a tree, in the

gloaming, like any village girl, did Horatia Grenville, who cared not for love, give and receive her first kiss.

Behind her, for a wonder and a benediction, hung the great luminous shield of the harvest moon, and the scattered blackberries lay among the leaves and stubble, like a sacrifice to joys unfathomed.

CHAPTER X

THE parting guest, unless he be a dear friend, is generally a *persona grata* to his host. Tristram Hungerford was rather ashamed of the sensation of relief with which he had faced his visitor at the breakfast table this morning, for the Comte de la Roche-Guyon had proved himself throughout his stay uniformly agreeable, lively, and anxious to please. But the elder man was only too conscious of their slender basis of common interests, and, though himself anything but taciturn, he was, like most people who live alone, physically incapable of talking all day without pause, and found the society of those persons so gifted (among whom Armand de la Roche-Guyon appeared to be numbered) rather fatiguing.

Moreover, he had not expected to find himself facing him at all this morning across the coffee-cups. When he had returned from Oxford yesterday morning, the morning after the dance, expecting to speed his guest on his way, he had been met by the young man's apologetic request to be allowed to stay another night, if convenient to his host. He had heard from his father, and there were reasons . . . Tristram made the only answer open to him, premising however that, thinking he should be alone that night, he had unfortunately engaged himself to dine at Faringdon, and would not be home till late. Armand would consequently, he feared, have a solitary dinner unless indeed he were to go over to Compton Rectory. The Comte replied that he might

conceivably walk over in the afternoon to pay his respects, but that he did not expect to be asked to dinner. And indeed he had set off in that direction a little before Tristram started for Faringdon.

But when Tristram returned from his dinner party, rather late in the evening, he found that the Frenchman had already gone to bed, and being himself tired, did not altogether regret this. And this morning, whether from a sleepless night, or any other cause, Armand was much less talkative than usual; he looked thoughtful and rather pale, and now, when the after-breakfast ease of two males devoid of the cares of housekeeping was about to descend upon them, he seemed unusually pre-occupied.

"I am afraid, La Roche-Guyon, that you had a bad night," said Tristram, as he rose from the table. "It was remiss of me not to have asked you earlier. You were not indisposed yesterday evening, I trust?"

"On the contrary," replied his guest somewhat cryptically. A gleam passed over his face, but Tristram, who was hunting on the mantelpiece for the key of the clock, did not see it. "I had the best night of my life."

"I am glad to hear it," replied his host. "But I am extremely sorry that I cannot drive or send you into Oxford to catch the coach. I pretty well knocked up both my horses yesterday."

"Pray not to think of it," said Armand politely. "I have made arrangements to post from the *Fox*. Already you have been too kind in taking me so many times to Oxford. . . . And now I have to beg of you another kindness."

"I am at your service," said Tristram, finding and inserting the key.

"Vous êtes bien bon," said the Comte, his English

suddenly deserting him. "C'est que——" He broke off, walked over to the window, and there, taking hold of the tassel of the curtain-cord, said, with more composure :

"The fact is, that Miss Grenville has promised to marry me. And as M. le Recteur, when I saw him yesterday evening, did not appear very much to like the idea, I was obliged to refer him to you. I told him that you could speak for me if you would—that you knew my family, and that I am not a—what do you call it—impostor, as he seemed to think. . . . It was that which I said to him."

He ceased, and in Tristram's head the ticks of the half-resuscitated clock rang like gongs.

"I do not wonder that you are surprised," went on Armand, in his pleasant voice, and in more and more shaky English. "But I am mad with love of her since the day we meet—tiens, I have thought sometimes that you remarked it—and she . . . well, she has consented to be my wife. You may guess if I think myself to be the most fortunate man on earth . . ." He said more ; Tristram did not hear it. But he at last forced himself to turn round, and saw the speaker standing there against the window.

"When did this happen ? " he asked—or someone asked.

"Yesterday evening. It was why I stayed—I must avow it to you, my friend. First I go to the Rectory—no one is there ; they tell me Miss Grenville visits a cottage. I too go to the cottage, and meet her in the lane——."

"What do you want me to do ? "

Armand made a gesture. "To use your good offices for me with M. le Recteur. He was not very polite. He

thinks that I am not sufficient of a parti. Mais, figurez-vous bien that on the contrary I shall have work enough to persuade my father to a foreign marriage, even with so divine a creature, and as well-born——"

Tristram was never to know whether he would have succeeded in keeping indefinitely his self-command, for at that moment his housekeeper fortunately entered to tell them that the *Fox* had just sent to say that they had no post-horses this morning, there having been some mistake about the order yesterday.

Out of the maze of shock and anguish one thing was plain to Tristram, that to have Armand's presence further inflicted upon him was intolerable. "After all, my horses——" he began, but the Frenchman cut him short.

"No, not for worlds! I will go round to the *Fox* at once myself. In these cases of 'no post-horses' it is always only a question of money. More than ever must I now go quickly to Lulworth—to get my father's consent," he added in French for the sole benefit of his host, and vanished.

So *this* was Horatia's choice! Tristram stumbled to a chair and covered his face. Coffee-pot and empty cups witnessed the wreck of hopes that might well have had a more tragic setting.

(2)

The door opening noisily brought Tristram almost immediately after to his feet. The intruder was the Hon. and Rev. Stephen Grenville, unannounced, short of breath, and angry as Tristram had never seen him.

He shut the door and looked round with positive ferocity.

"Is that young scamp here?"

Tristram regarded him dizzily. "No. . . I don't think so," he answered, as if he were not quite sure.

"Do you know what has happened?" demanded Mr. Grenville. "Yes, I can see that you do! That foreigner of yours had the impudence to walk into my study last night and ask for my consent to his marriage with Horatia—Horatia!" The Rector became momentarily speechless. "This young adventurer, who has been here a fortnight, has the audacity to say he is going to marry my daughter!" He flung himself down in a chair.

"It was only last night, then, as he says?"

"Yes, it happened last night, but it goes further back than that. My eyes were opened after the dance the night before last, when she gave him I don't know how many dances, and they disappeared together at the end. Why on earth did you choose that evening to go to Oxford? I took her home, and then in the carriage she began to cry—said she was tired. I didn't sleep a wink that night, but I congratulated myself that the spark was off yesterday. Imagine my surprise when they walked in together yesterday evening, and he tells me as cool as you please that it is natural I should be surprised, but that you would vouch for him!—Why can't you say something, man?"

"What does Horatia say?" asked Tristram, very white.

"Don't speak to me about Horatia!" cried the irate parent. "I ought to have shut her up with bread and water. I have spoilt her, and this is the outcome of it. And as for you—I can't think why you ever brought a Frenchman about the place!"

Before Tristram could reply to this thrust the Frenchman in question came hastily in, equipped, as was

evident, for an immediate start, a cloak over his arm, his hat in his hand.

"I regret that I have to go at once—but at once!" he said to Tristram. "Ah! pardon, M. le Recteur, I did not observe you"—though the bound with which Mr. Grenville had quitted his chair must have rendered him hard to overlook.—"Excuse me that I take leave of my kind host. It seems," he went on, turning to that individual, "that the horses I have procured are old and slow, and that to catch the coach from Oxford I must start immediately. So, with a thousand apologies ——"

"Understand, Sir," interrupted the Rector in high wrath, "that I will not entertain your proposal for an instant, and that I forbid you to come near my house!"

The Comte de la Roche-Guyon transferred his attention to the angry cleric. "Mais parfaitement, Monsieur," he responded with a bland little bow. "I should not dream of entering your house again until I have the consent of my father to the alliance. I go at once to Lulworth in the hope of obtaining that consent. It was not, indeed, what I should have wished, to speak to your daughter before approaching you, but, as I had the honour of telling you last night, Monsieur, I did seek to ask your permission first, but you were out, and time was short. Enfin, when I come again I trust it will be more en règle. Meanwhile, I am your humble servant." He made the Rector another, more formal, valedictory bow, and advanced upon Tristram.

"I know that I leave my cause in good hands," he said gracefully. "Cher ami, for that, as for your hospitality, I shall be your debtor for life. But you English do not like speeches, I know, and time presses . . ."

As much to prevent a second ebullition of Mr.

Grenville's wrath as because time pressed the cher ami hastened with his guest from the room. A few last directions from himself, a smile or two from Armand, a shake of the hand, and the man who had so lightly taken his happiness from him was gone, confident, easy, and attractive to the last.

When Tristram came back into the dining-room the Rector was still standing thunderstruck on the hearth-rug.

"Well!" he ejaculated pregnantly, "for sheer impudence commend me to one of that nation!"

Tristram sat wearily down without replying to this cry of the heart, and there was silence, broken only by a sort of soliloquy on the Rector's part, on the blindness which had been his—and Tristram's.

"Couldn't you see it coming, Tristram?" he repeated. "Although I was such a fool, couldn't *you* see it. But there, they say Love is blind. It must be, or you would never have . . . have . . ."

"Have thrown them together," finished Tristram bitterly. "Is there any need to tell you that in my wildest moments I could never have conceived of such a thing? I saw that he admired her and paid her compliments, as he might any—perhaps every—woman, but to me he was . . . just negligible. He was welcome to pay court to her, if she liked it, because . . . because I could not dream that she . . ."

"There's nothing in that!" said the Rector briefly. "With women you never can tell. But, of course, it is impossible that it should be allowed to go on. You must come back with me, Tristram. You at least have influence with her. I have never yet forbidden her anything—it has never been my way—and I would rather she came to it of herself."

Colour shot into the younger man's face. "I would do anything to help you, Sir, and much more to help Horatia; but I can't do that—not yet."

Mr. Grenville looked away from him. "God bless my soul, what a selfish brute I am . . . But come now, my dear boy, once he's gone it will be all right. Horatia will settle down. It's only a passing fancy; of that I feel certain. I have never known her other than sensible. She will see that it's out of the question.—You don't agree with me, eh?"

"From what I know of Horatia, I am afraid that I don't."

"But you are going to propose to her yourself!" said the Rector in accents of amazement, slewing round in his chair.

Out of his pain Tristram showed his own surprise. "No, not now; it's impossible."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Mr. Grenville with great directness. "Then I shall tell her myself."

"Mr. Grenville, I beg of you, I implore you not to do such a thing!" exclaimed the young man in agitation. "It is useless; worse than useless. It would only grieve her kind heart. How little chance could I have ever had! She has—she must have given her love with both hands; I do not think so meanly of her as to imagine that she could ever transfer it . . . a gift so priceless," he added to himself.

The Rector pressed his lips together and rose. "Well, I can't understand the present generation. If I had been in your shoes I should have been married to her any time these five years. These reticences and delicacies are beyond me. If a man wants a girl, let him ask for her!"

Tristram smiled a rather dreary smile, thinking that

even the successful suitor was not finding this course altogether satisfactory.

"You know I never held your views on persistent courtship, Sir. It would have been better for me, perhaps, if I had . . . But this I will do, for Horatia's own sake: I will come over directly I can, and I will try my best to show her that there are . . . difficulties . . . to take into consideration. But I warn you that if I think it is for her happiness I shall oppose you, Mr. Grenville. I would get her the moon if she wanted it!"

And the sudden passion of this last utterance left Horatia's father dumb.

CHAPTER XI

(1)

Not only the slumber proper to the Long Vacation, but the particular drowsy calm of the afternoon hung that day in sunlight over Oriel. In his lodge at the gate the porter dozed peaceably over *Jackson's Oxford Journal*; and, owing to this charmed sleep, a stray black spaniel, of an architectural turn of mind, who had now for half an hour or so been exploring both quadrangles, was at this moment seated quietly in the outer, in front of that porch which distinguishes Oriel from all other colleges, appearing to meditate, in the intervals of scratching himself, on the characteristics of Oxford Gothic, or to admire the few plants in pots, relics of the summer term, ranked down the steps against the wall. Across this porch the September sun cut diagonally, so that half the statue of the Virgin above it was in shade, and one of the two Kings beneath her, and the shadow of the gables from the gateway front lay in sloping battlements on the gravel. Merton tower, looking down over the chapel roof with its air of being part of the same building, was still in full sunlight, like the Provost's lodgings on the north side of the quadrangle, but, save the slowly creeping shadows, the spaniel was the only living thing visible in the sleepy peace which no undergraduate clamour had disturbed for three months past.

Such Fellows as were in residence were out walking or riding—all but two. The porter, if roused, could have told an inquirer—as he was shortly to tell Tristram—that Mr. Dormer was in his rooms ; that he was working very hard, he believed, and had not been out of college, let alone on a horse, for three days. Up the staircase on the right—not that he gave this unnecessary indication to Mr. Hungerford.

But at the present moment, though Tristram's friend was sitting at his manuscript-strewn writing-table, he was not working ; he was leaning back in his tall chair, seeming not a little exhausted. Those who looked at Charles Dormer's face only once were apt, on that first impression, to think it refined to the point of femininity. But they never said so a second time. Somewhat unnaturally thin for a young man of thirty, it spoke of an early-learnt self-control, of ardour in leash and a very sensitive endurance, the whole touched with a kind of angelic severity and force. The eyes were kinder than the mouth, and if the expression suggested possibilities of relentlessness, it indicated still more clearly against whom that relentlessness would chiefly be directed—probably for some years had already been directed—Charles Dormer. But since to these less popular attributes the young Fellow joined a general physical exterior of unusual distinction, he did not meet with any marked success in his constant endeavour to make himself out quite an ordinary person. People were only too ready to see in him the ancestor who fell for the King at Newbury, and Tristram, when he wished genuinely to annoy him, had merely to repeat the effusive remarks on his appearance which he had the fortune to overhear from some fair lips one Commemoration. Mr. Dormer of Oriel had no use for the externals of romance.

(2)

Axe, going leisurely through her pastures to the sea, had known continually, as the old century died and the new was born, the laughter and noise of a tribe of beautiful and healthy children, who raced in her meadows, fished in her waters, and dwelt upon the banks of her daughter Coly. All the Axe valley, indeed, knew Mr. Dormer of Colyton, and his handsome sons. His beautiful and delicate wife they knew less. Mr. Dormer, genial hard-riding gentleman that he was, came of Non-juring stock, long since conformed to the Establishment ; his wife, of like origin, had all the piety and devotion proper to a spiritual descendant of Andrewes and Ken, coupled with a strong tendency to mysticism.

Mary Dormer, indeed, might in any other country or age have been a nun. As it was, she had borne five children to the husband who reverenced her as a saint, and only one quarter understood her. But as at last her extreme and increasing delicacy shut her off from the more ordinary family cares, she was able to lead in her seclusion a life not unlike the cloistered. All her sons resembled their father in temperament and shared his interests—all but one. Nature had bestowed on Mary Dormer's youngest child a measure of her delicacy but even more of her spirit. So when Henry, who intended to be a great soldier, like him of Blenheim and Malplaquet, who had spent his boyhood here at Ashe House, when Christopher, who would be a sailor, if he did not meanwhile drown himself either in Axe or on Seaton shore, when Robert, the most turbulent of all, who was destined for the Bar—when all these elder brothers, brimming with spirits, set forth on some neck-breaking

expedition, little Charles was left contentedly with his mother. Mr. Dormer would sometimes grumblingly predict that his youngest boy would grow up a milksop, the others occasionally tease him for a mother's darling, but since the child, when he was big enough, could sit a horse rather better, if anything, than his elders, and was extraordinarily lucky with a fishing-rod, his brothers were forced to render him the tribute of a slightly grudging admiration for a prowess that cost him so little pains.

Yet, to the mind of the child who did these things with such ease and gaiety, the world he knew was little different from the Garden of Eden, or from that celestial city of which the particulars were familiar to him from the old hymn, in the faded seventeenth century writing, which his mother read to him till he knew it by heart. But there were disparities. "Quite through the streets, with silver sound," said the hymn with precision, yet the Coly put a circling arm around, not through his home. Other resemblances were more exact, their own garden, for instance, where grew, indubitably, the pleasantest flowers that could be seen, and where at least the long straight path between the laurels—"the gallant walk" as he called it,—was, as in Paradise, always green. Still it was pleasant to think that in the heavenly city no "dampish mists" would come up from the sea to prevent his going out whenever he had a mind to, and that David, standing harp in hand as master of the choir, would probably sing more sweetly than his present prototype in Colyton Church. On the other hand it was plain that since "no spider's web, no dirt, no dust, no filth may there be seen," the garden tool-shed and similar attractive places could have no counterpart above.

Accompanied as the child was by his simple and joyous thoughts, it would never have surprised him had he seen the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the evening, or met an angel as he himself ran singing through the grass and flowers on Coly's banks. Perhaps he did. And he supposed that everybody else had the same expectations, but that Christopher and Robert, for instance, did not speak of them because he himself never spoke of them, save to his mother. Nor was he remarkable for obedience. All his after-life he was to struggle with his own masterful will. He fell into the stream by the weir, where he had been straitly charged not to go, and was with difficulty rescued by a brother ; he would ride prohibited horses, consort occasionally with forbidden companions ; he was at once dreamy and wilful, sweet-tempered and naughty. With all this he seemed to her who knew him best—and who was to him, it must be confessed, more like an elder sister and companion than a mother—such a child as Adam and Eve might have had before the Fall, and it was almost with awe that, as he grew older, she set about teaching him what she knew of Church doctrine, and in particular that belief in the Real Presence which had been miraculously preserved by the few in a materialistic age. Pathetically certain that one day the Church would unearth her neglected treasure, she gave him the Prayer-Book in which that treasure was enshrined, saying so solemnly, "Never let anyone take that away from you, Charles," that for years the boy kept it wrapped up in a silk handkerchief, and lived in expectation of having to do battle for its retention.

Mrs. Dormer died just when Charles was ready to go to school, and at eleven, motherless, he was plunged into the rough and tumble of Eton life. The Garden of

Eden was gone for ever, and there was scarcely a sign-post on the way to the Heavenly City. But the child of Mary Dormer had his own pillar of fire to lead him through the wilderness. . . . Towards the end of his schooldays he met his life-long friend, and together, in 1818, they went up to Oriel.

Though at Eton Dormer was considered odd and dreamy, it was known that he possessed powers above the average, and great things were prophesied of his University career. A great thing indeed awaited him at Oxford—the influence of John Keble. If Oriel had a distinguished reputation its most brilliant member had a more distinguished. Winner of a Double First and of two University prizes, already for seven years Fellow of a college that worshipped intellectual attainments, Keble was himself the herald of reaction from the Noetic philosophy to the older school of authority and tradition. Humility and otherworldliness had little in common with "march of mind," nor a quiet confidence in the Divine Commission of the Church with a speculation that was eventually to issue in free thought. All Charles Dormer's longing for "the severe sweetness of the life divine," all his ardent conviction that better things were to come, seemed to find their vindication in the faith and in the practice of this young man, not ten years older than himself, and there soon sprang up between the two an appreciation as lasting as that which a few years later was to unite John Keble and Richard Hurrell Froude. Eton prognostications were nevertheless fulfilled when, in 1822, the same year as Newman, Dormer, having already taken a Double First, won the coveted prize of an Oriel Fellowship.

The new Fellow, now reading for Orders, was made welcome enough in Common Room, but after Keble's

departure from Oxford in the following year he was rather lonely. He did not find real companionship among the elder Fellows in residence, Hawkins, Tyler, or Dornford ; with the younger he often walked or rode, but Newman was an Evangelical, and of the two whom he had known at Eton, Pusey was silent and depressed, Jelf of too practical a temperament. Keble alone shared his ideals, for though his own affection was given steadfastly to Tristram Hungerford, the grief at Tristram's development which had haunted him through the three years of their joint college life was sharpened rather than assuaged when their time together was over, and Hungerford definitely enlisted in the Latitudinarian or (in the phraseology of the day) the Liberal camp. He had fought for his friend and lost.

But the consequences of that defeat were far-reaching. Because of his sympathy for Tristram and for others like him, who were honest in their difficulties, Dormer tried, for the first time, to find the intellectual reason for his own clear faith. First-class man and Fellow of Oriel as he was, he could not. He had at last boldly to admit that his certainty was not gained by reason, though it was reasonable, and that the most his unaided intellect could do was to give him high probability. If faith was then ultimately a gift, to be won by surrender to a Divine Person, how great was the need of a Society in living communion with that Person, a Society strong alike in learning and in spirituality! And what of that Church of which he was a member? Was it because she fell so far short of what she might be that the time seemed to be coming when she would be swept away by the tide of unbelief which, since the days of the French Revolution, had devastated the Continent? Indeed, unless she made haste to seek out

the credentials of her Divine commission and to reforge the links which bound her to the Church of the first ages, would she even be worth saving from that flood?

And then the day came when Charles Dormer found that he was not alone in these conclusions, for the same premisses were bringing together, in his own college, a number of persons whose loyalty to the Church led them to think not merely of defence but of reform. Dormer's rooms became henceforward the scene of many a fervid discussion, many a stimulating argument. In the end, even as Hurrell Froude, the youngest and most ardent fighter of them all, had drawn in his Evangelical and Whatelyan friend, so did Dormer insensibly win over the man for whom his affection had first set him on this track. And to Charles Dormer, not unnaturally, the adhesion of John Henry Newman was of vastly less importance than that of Tristram Hungerford.

(3)

Dormer's pen was still between his fingers. He roused himself, turned once more to the table, added a final sentence to the last sheet, and laid down the pen; then he leant back again with a long sigh. He was tired, for he had been finishing his book at high pressure; but he was more tired than he ought to have been, and he knew it. He supposed that he would pay for the strain by a bout of the disabling headaches, whose increasing frequency, during the last six months, had begun to make him uneasy.

And at this moment, just as Tristram in his need was riding towards him up St. Aldate's, he put his head back against his chair and began to think of him with peculiar affection. For fourteen years the bonds of their friend-

ship had only drawn the closer. Tristram at last had the same cause at heart, and was about to take Orders. There was only one thing which separated them. He himself would never marry, but Tristram certainly would, and Dormer continually reproached himself with the quite human regret which this reflection sometimes roused in him. With his profound belief in the Providence of God, he felt that Tristram had always been destined for home life, and that he belonged, or would belong to the class of clergy who, in England at all events, seem able to serve their people best by being one with them in actual experience of the common life. For though Dormer would have wished that class to be numerically the smaller, the idea of an enforced celibacy was abhorrent to him.

And hitherto he had encouraged Tristram to hope that the time might yet come when Horatia would listen to him. But the results of his observations at Tristram's dinner-party last week had been most disturbing. Was it possible that this young Frenchman was carrying off Miss Grenville's heart—he did not say her hand—under Tristram's very eyes? This seemed scarcely credible, yet he had of set purpose interrupted their conversation that evening, and had felt uneasy ever since, for a reason that he could scarcely define. But perhaps he had been mistaken; at any rate, he hoped so . . .

He was at this point when a knock came at the door.

"Come in," he said, opening his eyes to see the subject of his meditations before him. He sprang up. "My dear fellow! I am delighted to see you. Forgive this litter."

"I hardly expected to find you in college at this hour," remarked Tristram, glancing at the table. "I suppose this is the reason for it."

Dormer nodded, and began gathering the sheets

together. "The Non-jurors must be got out of the way as soon as possible, now that I have promised to undertake this work on the Councils for Rose. I've just been writing to Keble about his proposals, for, adequately carried out, they might provide almost a lifework for the person who undertook them."

"But *you* have promised definitely to undertake them."

"Yes, I've accepted," said Dormer sitting down again with something like a sigh. "It's rather a daunting prospect, you know, Tristram, and yet it may be the work for which one has been waiting. I am so glad that you managed to see Rose the other evening; I wanted you particularly to meet him. He is the coming man."

"Oh, is he?" replied Tristram not very enthusiastically. "Well, yes, I was glad to meet him. He showed his sense in asking you to do this, anyhow. But what about those headaches?"

"Suppose you leave my headaches alone," retorted Dormer smiling. "You look rather fagged yourself. Will you have some tea, or would you rather have a glass of ale after your ride?—I seem to have been talking a great deal about myself."

If he had, the circumstance was so unusual—save perhaps in his present company—as scarcely to call for apology.

"Neither, thanks," answered Tristram, who was wandering restlessly round the room, which he knew as well as his own. "I am not tired that I know of. . . I like that drawing of Cologne Cathedral. Who gave it you—Froude?"

"No," said Dormer, watching him suddenly rather intently. "It was Robert Wilberforce."

Tristram strayed to a bookcase. "Hallo," he remarked, "here are these Non-juring books of yours

which I am always meaning to have a look at. What is this—'Devotions for the Canonical Hours, to be used in the houses of the clergy and by all religious societies where there is a priest.' Surely that is strange!"

"It always sounds to me like an eighteenth century Little Gidding," answered his friend. "That copy belonged to Cartwright, the Shrewsbury apothecary, and the last Non-juring Bishop. I had an older book, called 'A Companion for the Penitent, and for Persons troubled in mind,' but I gave it to Keble."

"I expect he was pleased with it," commented his visitor. He put back the book and came and threw himself down in a chair. "Doesn't it seem strange to have finished, after all this time?"

"Yes," said Dormer, looking at his papers, "and I believe I am almost sorry. But it would have been a pity to spend longer over the Non-jurors, for I expect very few people will so much as glance at the book."

"When I was talking to Froude the other day he seemed to hold a different opinion," said Tristram.

"Ah, yes, but then you see he is almost as keen about the Non-jurors as I am myself. I have heard him say that he was beginning to think that they were the last of English divines, and that those since were twaddlers."

"Froude is almost too bold. He doesn't seem to care what he says."

"But," continued Dormer, leaning back in his chair, "although I know, of course, that it will be read by a few, what I mean is that it will appeal chiefly to those already interested. And if this remark applies to a modern book, how much more will it apply to what I am afraid will be a rather dull work on the first centuries. —You know, Tristram, what we want alongside of this sort of thing is some more arresting kind of writing,

some series of short essays in a popular form that could be circulated among the country clergy—essays to prove the continuity of the Church for instance. In this book I've been trying to show the direct connection between Non-jurors, the Caroline divines, the ancient Church of England, and the primitive Church. For the next five years or so I shall be trying to point out, by means of the history of the principal Councils, that the doctrine of the Church of England is that of an undivided Christendom. I don't say my volumes won't be read, but I do say that the same thing put in a cheaper and shorter form would be more read."

"Why shouldn't it be done, then?"

"Well, it's an idea," admitted Dormer. "It is the country clergy that we need to get hold of, for after all they are the people who really count. I must talk to Newman about it. I fancy it might appeal to him."

"What might appeal to Newman?" asked a voice. The door was open, and in the aperture stood a young man of twenty-seven or so, tall, thin to the point of emaciation, with very bright eyes and an air of being intensely alive. "I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for bursting in upon you; but the only thing that appeals to Newman just now is his mother's furniture at Rose Hill—at least I hope it is appealing to him, for he has gone to Iffley with Wilberforce to inspect it."

"Oh, come in, Froude," said Dormer. "If you had been eavesdropping a moment or two earlier you would have heard Hungerford's opinion of you."

Hurrell Froude smiled, and, shutting the door, half leant, half sat on Dormer's writing-table. "I don't care in the least what Hungerford thinks of me. I have just had a shock. Did you know that the first Latitudinarians were Tories? I did not. It looks

as if Whiggery has by degrees taken up all the filth that has been secreted by human thought—Puritanism, Latitudinarianism, Popery, infidelity, they have it all!"

Tristram laughed. "Is that the result of your studies at Dartington last month, Froude? I thought you were working at the English Reformers."

"So I was," replied the intruder, "but their civilities to the smug fellows on the Continent, added to the fact that the weather was rather hot, stuck in my gizzard. Their odious Protestantism——"

"Ah!" interrupted Dormer like lightning. "It was too hot for work at Dartington, was it? We've got that admission at last! Have I not always maintained that there was no air so far up the Dart? Now at Colyton there is always the valley breeze either up or down the Axe."

"Horrible!" ejaculated Froude, running his long thin hand through his hair with a gesture of repulsion. "Like living in a perpetual draught! Now at Dartington——"

"O, for Heaven's sake!" cried Tristram. The interminable feud between the two Devonians on the merits of their respective birthplaces and rivers was one of the standing jokes of the Common Room, and Dormer had just scored one by Froude's careless admission.

Froude got off the table. "Out of regard for you, my dear Hungerford, we will cease. I really came in to ask Dormer if he would ride with me one afternoon this week. I have found a delightful little thirteenth century church in Buckinghamshire with piscina, sedilia and all complete, and I want him to see it."

"I'll come with pleasure. But that reminds me,"

said Dormer, rummaging in a drawer and getting out a little water-colour sketch of a church tower. "What do you think of that?"

The visitor took it and looked at it attentively for a moment. "Charming," he pronounced. "Where is it? I sometimes think I like a square tower better than a spire, especially when it has an elegant lantern like this. It is nowhere near here, I am sure. Is——" He broke off suspiciously, for Dormer was standing looking at him with a mischievous smile.

"That is Colyton church tower which you are pleased to admire," said he.

Hurrell Froude flung down the sketch. "Villain!" he exclaimed, and broke into a fit of coughing. "That was a traitor's trick," he said, as soon as he could get breath. "I don't admire it at all, and I'm off. You will end as a Whig, or something worse, if that is possible!"

"Well, I must be getting back also," said Tristram, as the door closed. "How did Froude get that cough, I wonder? I only came in to see how you were."

"Your guest has gone, I suppose?"

"Went this morning," responded his friend, briefly.

"Oh, I thought he was to leave yesterday."

"He stayed another night. Good-bye; I must go."

"Wait a moment," urged Dormer. "I want you to read that." And he tossed a letter across the table.

"From Habington," remarked Tristram, taking it up. "What has he got to say?"

"You read it and see," persisted Dormer. "I wish someone would tell *me* what to say. I haven't the knack of writing to people in his interesting situation."

Tristram read the letter as desired, Dormer studying him the while. Something *had* happened!

"Habington engaged to be married!" exclaimed Tristram. "Well, I must say I am surprised. I thought he was a convert to your celibate views."

"I thought so once too, but, apart from Froude, and perhaps Newman, I intend to believe in no man's constancy in future."

"You're very fierce, Charles!"

"Well, I am disappointed. Habington was doing good work here in Oxford; now he must give up his Fellowship at Trinity and be a family man in a country parsonage. He will do good and be an example wherever he is, but he cannot be what he might have been."

"Then," said Tristram slowly, "if I marry after I take Orders I shall not be what I might have been?"

A look that few people ever saw came into Charles Dormer's eyes. He leant forward on the table, his elbows on his scattered manuscripts. "Tristram," he said earnestly, "you know that you have always had my good wishes, and you have them still. You are so obviously cut out for the charities and the humanities. . . ." He stopped and looked down at his papers. "I don't think I am being a sawney about you, even when I want you to be happy."

Tristram was at the door, his hand on the handle. His voice came jerkily. "I am afraid your good wishes are of no use to me now . . . Yes, I wanted you to know, but I can't tell you, after all . . . I only hope I shall do what is right."

He was gone, and Dormer, half-risen from his chair, was left staring at the closed door.

But as Tristram rode over Folly Bridge, where the river ran yellow in the sunset, he knew that his course lay plain before him.

Half way up the long hill he checked his horse, and from sheer habit turned in the saddle. There stood the towers, orderly and lovely, in the faint mist of the autumn day's ending. He almost fancied that he could hear the bells of Magdalen. Many and many a time, riding into Oxford on summer afternoons, on winter mornings, had he pretended to himself that he was seeing the city for the first time, that its streets were strange to him, its pinnacles a new delight. Now, without any effort of the imagination, it seemed to him both that everything he had ever loved lay below him, cruel and valedictory, never to greet him again, and that it was a place in essence still unentered, an alien city. So, by the mind's alchemy, were the town he had loved and the woman he had lost made one, for a second, in his spirit.

But his course was plain. He rode on up the hill.

CHAPTER XII

(1)

TRISTRAM'S plain course was to lead him, and he knew it, into the waste places of the spirit. In such a desert he wrestled, two days later, with a radiant Horatia, himself miserably conscious both of the interpretation that the world would put upon his action, and of the futility of his effort, and stabbed to the heart by her transfigured personality, to him the surest evidence of what had happened.

Yet she was the same Horatia, as kind, as generous as ever. She listened very patiently to his exposition of the difficulties attendant on a marriage with a man of a different race, of a different creed ; she seemed even to do homage to the motive which had prompted him to speech. A lesser woman, so much in love as she, would, he thought, have sent him about his business.

She smiled at him divinely when he had finished.

" Dear, dear Tristram," she said, and she put her hand on his. " You are indeed, as you have always been, the best of friends. Everything you say is true, and I know you have not liked to say it. But you see that it is no good, and so I want you to be on my side in the fight I am afraid that I am going to have with dearest Papa. Will you ? "

" I have already told him," said Tristram, " that if I thought the match was for your happiness, I should uphold it."

"*My happiness!* You cannot doubt that, can you, Tristram?"

He did not answer.

"Papa is in his study," she suggested. "Suppose you were to go now and see what you can do with him?"

"I will try," he answered.

She came after him to the door, thanking him. He could not have borne much more.

(2)

The Rector was sitting at his study table. "Well," he said, as the envoy entered. "What does she say? You have been my last hope of persuading her to see things sensibly."

Tristram crossed the room, and did not immediately answer. He had already professed himself convinced of Horatia's determination, but hope will lurk in such odd corners of the heart, that not till this moment did he know how the frail thing had really ceased to flutter in him.

"I am afraid," he said at last, "that I have been worse than useless, for I have promised to try to persuade *you*."

The Rector veered round in his chair to face him. "You, *you*, Tristram, support her! Then the world has gone crazy!" He took off his glasses and for a full half-minute gazed at the figure standing rather rigidly before him. "You really mean to tell me that, knowing Horatia as you do, you think I ought to take seriously this passing fancy?"

"I'm afraid I do, Sir," said Tristram steadily; "but, then, I cannot think it a passing fancy now that I have seen her and talked to her. Horatia does not have

whims. If she changes, she changes whole-heartedly, and I confess I have never seen anyone so altered." His voice wavered for a moment. "She has put her whole happiness in Armand de la Roche-Guyon, and if you thwart her, you will be taking a very heavy responsibility."

"All the same," said the Rector stubbornly, "I *shall* take it. As you probably know, under French law my consent is a very important matter, and I shall certainly not give it. Allow my daughter to marry a foreigner, and a Papist—a Papist, Tristram, do you realise that?"

Tristram gave a little sigh. "I do, indeed, only too well. That is what clinched the matter for me. I mean I thought, of course, that it would be a serious obstacle to Horatia's mind, yet when I suggested it as a difficulty, she only said, 'But I love him, what else matters?' For Horatia, with her upbringing and her views that means a great deal. I confess I hardly understand it."

"Nor I," returned Mr. Grenville. "She has said the same to me, and even when I told her that her children would have to be brought up as Roman Catholics, she said that she did not like the idea, but she supposed that people always had to pay for happiness. He has bewitched her! But I shall save her from herself, Tristram. To throw herself away on the first wandering foreigner!"

"His father is a peer of France," said Tristram very quietly, "and Horatia will be a great lady. She is not throwing herself away in that sense."

The Rector gave an impatient exclamation, and brought his hands down violently on his knees. "To hear you talk, Tristram, anyone might suppose that you had something to gain from her marriage! 'Pon my

soul, the young men of the present day are beyond me! A fortnight ago, in this very room, you were telling me about your own feelings for Horatia, and now here you are, as calm and cool as any lawyer, trying to argue me into letting her marry this organ-grinder! Really I find it hard to remember that not long ago you were a boy yourself, and a boy, too, whom I had hoped to call my son!"

It was the final turn of the screw. Tristram left him and went over to the window.

"I can't speak of that side of it," he said brokenly. "I have loved her distractedly . . . I still love her . . . but there is her happiness to think of, and if she . . . if the Comte de la Roche-Guyon . . ." He could get no further, but laid his head against the cold glass.

"My dear boy, forgive me," exclaimed Mr. Grenville remorsefully. "I am so upset I don't know what I am saying. I'm a selfish old man, and you put me to shame . . . you put me to shame. . . ."

Sighing heavily, he turned round his chair to the table. He felt himself suddenly what he had often mendaciously declared himself to be, an old man. Perhaps it was wrong to struggle against the young—to play Providence overmuch. Yet this was Horatia's whole life at stake. Still, the man who stood silent there at the window, in what bitter pain he could guess, was able to see her go. He put out his hand, and took up the brass of Allectus, lying neglected among a disarray of papers, and, in the silence studied the galley on the reverse. At last he said miserably:

"What do you know about this young man?"

Tristram told him about the family, while the Rector turned the coin over and over.

"Yes, that's all right, I suppose, but what about the young man himself?"

"Frankly, I don't know any more than you do."

"But you have your suspicions, eh? Young Frenchmen don't bear a very good character, and you know that."

"Nor do all young Englishmen."

Mr. Grenville refused to be drawn off. "When you were in Paris, or wherever it was, Tristram, staying with his family, surely you must have heard something about him."

"No, not a rumour of the kind you mean."

"And yet," said the Rector, "you share my feelings about him. I know you do!"

"We have not either of us any right to have 'feelings' about him," retorted Tristram from the window. "We merely do not know. I would tell you if there had been anything. He may be a blackguard or he may be a hero. We don't know."

"Very well, then," said the Rector judicially, laying down the coin with precision. "I'll put it in another way. Do you consider him a fit husband for Horatia?"

Tristram started forward. "Mr. Grenville, don't drive me mad! You are putting me in a horrible position. Armand confides his interests to my hands; the first thing I do is to try to persuade Horatia not to marry him. Now you want to make me blacken his character . . . I beg your pardon, Sir!"

The Rector was on his feet. "It is for me to beg yours. My dear, dear boy, do forgive me! I am behaving abominably; I am not only selfish but mean —but if I do seem to have been trying to get you to say things against a rival (as I suppose I have), remember I am also trying to save Horatia from this . . . this

calamitous marriage, and you from your own fantastic principles. It is all such a confusion, but I am really trying for your own happiness as well as hers . . . You know, Tristram, I'm sure you could still have her if you tried, when she has forgotten him. . . . But do say that you forgive me ! "

The young man took his outstretched hand. " As if I had anything to forgive, Sir ! " Then he went back with him to the table and sat down beside him, and once again reiterated his conviction that Horatia would not forget her lover, that he himself had no chance now, probably never had, so that the case must be considered on its own merits, and that perhaps, after all, the two were made for each other—though here, indeed, the conviction sounded less sincere.

" Well," said the Rector, looking at him with affection as he finished, " however this turns out I am not likely to forget how you have behaved ! And perhaps (but don't say so to Horatia) I may have to think about the possibility some day—but not yet . . . no, not yet ! "

CHAPTER XIII

(1)

THE ostler of the Red Lion at Compton Regis and one of the stablemen, who happened at the time to be conversing outside that hostelry, were the only persons in the village privileged to behold a certain blue and yellow postchaise draw up in front of the inn at dusk on an evening in October. Scenting a guest of importance, and preparing to summon the landlord, the ostler was, however, stayed by a curt inquiry from the postilion—

"Be this the way to Little Compton?"

"Straight on, first road to the left," responded the ostler, advancing into one of the paths of radiance cut by the lamps in the damp autumn air. "You're no Oxford man or you'd not ask."

"Well, why should I be an Oxford man?" retorted the postilion. "I'm from Salisbury, if you want to know, and damme, if that ain't as good as Oxford——"

But here a head was thrust out of the far window of the chaise, and a voice with a trace of foreign accent—the voice of a young man—demanded what the devil they had stopped for, and, grumbling, the postilion shouted to the steaming horses. As the chaise rolled off the ostler caught sight of a much older face, lit by the travelling lamp within the carriage. He stared after the receding vehicle.

"'Ere, Bill," he called, "I've seen a Dook. Strike me, but it's 'im wot's going to stay with Mr. 'Ungerford

down to Little Compton. 'Ear the posty say 'e come from Salisbury? That the Dook, sure enough, the old party. T'other'll be his son, the young spark wot was 'ere before."

"Dook! Wot's a furrin Dook?" queried the exclusive Bill, and spat on the ground.

(2)

These worthies were quite right in their surmises, and Mr. Hungerford down to Little Compton was at that moment awaiting, with what equanimity he might, the visit of his all but successful rival and of his father, to whom he had been forced to offer a hospitality which would probably ensure that rival's complete triumph. Nor was Tristram unaware of the ironical humour of the situation.

A week had scarcely passed since Armand's departure for Dorset—a week in which the transfigured Horatia had seemed to tread on air—when there came to her a letter from her lover saying that his father absolutely refused his consent to the match. Tristram did not like to think of the days that had followed, when Horatia went about the house dimmed and red-eyed—though she was generally invisible when he was at the Rectory—and when the Rector (so curiously are human beings compounded) raged alternately against Armand for his audacity and against the Duc de la Roche-Guyon for his prohibition. Nothing in fact could have done so much to forward the match, in so far as the Rector was concerned, as this obstacle: and at last, late one evening, Mr. Grenville came over to see Tristram quite broken, reiterating pitifully, "I am being driven to it. I can't have the child going into a decline," and ending

up : " As for this Duke, it's preposterous ! Who is he, I should like to know, to behave as if my Horatia were not good enough for his younger son ? As you know, Tristram, I detest boasting of my connections, but if it comes to that——"

And since Mr. Grenville could indeed claim cousinship of varying degrees with the Most Noble Richard Temple Nugent Brydges Chandos Grenville, Duke of Buckingham, and his brother Lord Nugent, with the Marquis of Chandos, and little Earl Temple, and old Lord Grenville, the Chancellor of the University of Oxford, it was hardly surprising that he was annoyed.

Tristram could only suggest that the Duc might come round. " It seems so strange," complained Mr. Grenville, " that he should be so opposed to his son's wishes, when his son is not a minor—how old is he ?—twenty-five or twenty-six, I suppose. . . . You don't think," he said suddenly, " that it's just a ruse on the young man's part to get out of marrying her—that he is repenting of it—that it was only a passing fancy on *his* part ? For if that should be so, Tristram, if he is capable of anything so vile, it will kill my girl." His voice shook with agitation. Gone for ever were the days when he would have hoped that such was the suitor's intention.

Tristram tried to reassure him, for he did not believe this to be the case. After the Rector, somewhat comforted, had gone, there was nothing left for him to do but to pray convulsively for Horatia's happiness.

And when, two days later, he got a letter from Armand, saying that as the King was moving to Holyrood in mid-October he had prevailed on his father to break the journey northward and come with him to Compton Regis, and that he, Armand, had hopes . . .

it was with real relief as well as with repugnance that Tristram did what Armand obviously hoped he would do, and invited his father and him to honour his roof during their sojourn. And if anything could have nerved him this evening to endure the position in which he had placed himself, it was the brief sight which he had of Horatia that day when he went over to tell the Rector that everything was arranged—of Horatia as she turned on him a sort of rainbow look of gratitude.

That was this morning. Now he was out in the dark and the damp to welcome his guests, exchanging suitable greetings with the elder and submitting to Armand's embrace.

"Ah, mon cher, how amiable of you to receive us thus! We have had a dog of a journey. Mon père, enter then, while I pay the postilion; you should not expose yourself thus to the damp."

"No, indeed," said Tristram. "If you will come in, M. le Duc . . ."

In the hall, the face of M. le Duc de la Roche-Guyon appeared above the high collar of his full cloak, old, pale, rather bleached-looking. He was beginning a stately little speech when his son appeared, full of solicitude and hurried him upstairs. And Armand in person reappeared alone before dinner in order to get a few words with his host. Tristram had been preparing himself for this. The young man professed profound gratitude, was sure that if his father once saw the lady of his choice, all would be well. He himself was more hopeful than he had been for weeks past.

"In fact," he went on, his eyes sparkling, "I believe the day is already won. My grandmother supports me—and that will turn the scale. My father has great

respect for her wishes. Her letter arrived, praise the saints, just before we left Lulworth."

Tristram now remembered to have heard something of an autocratic old Dowager Duchess, the Duke's mother.

"She says—mais n'importe," went on the Comte. "Now, with your permission, and if my father does not appear too tired, I will leave you after dinner to yourselves."

"You are trusting me with a good deal, La Roche-Guyon," Tristram was moved to remark.

"Parbleu, are you not my friend!" retorted the Frenchman. "Besides, you are one of those people whom it is natural to trust."

Although the Duc, when he appeared, was very plainly, if immaculately attired, he somehow radiated from his person an air of courts and of diplomacy very foreign to Tristram's dining-room and its solid British furniture. He was grand seigneur to his finger-tips, polished, melancholy, affable, and perfectly simple in his address; but it required no effort to imagine the absent cordon bleu and stars on his breast. Armand behaved towards him with a mingled air of deference and affection which, while it amused Tristram—so far as he was capable of being amused by anything—did not displease him, for it appeared genuine and habitual. Apparently the young man considered the paternal health equal to a discussion, for after one glass of port he very unembarrassedly excused himself, and left the others still seated with their wineglasses at the polished mahogany.

The Duc looked after him with a little smile of amusement and affection flitting across his delicate bloodless lips.

"That is the signal for us to begin our 'conversations,' Monsieur. You have plenipotentiary powers, I think?"

"I—not in the least!" said Tristram, somewhat alarmed. "I have no—no official position at all in the matter. It will be between yourself, M. le Duc, and the lady's father. Anything that I can arrange, in the way of a meeting between you, I shall be happy to do, and any information I have is at your service. Beyond that I cannot go."

The older man bowed. "You are a kinsman, I think, Monsieur?"

"Distant," said Tristram. "I rather count myself an old friend."

"Of M. Grenville or of Mademoiselle?"

"Of both."

"And—pardon me if I ask an impertinent question, but we must know where we stand—as a kinsman and as an old friend, you have yourself no objection to this alliance?"

"I am solely desirous of Miss Grenville's happiness," responded Tristram, his eyes on the foot of his wineglass.

"And you think that the match with my son will ensure it?"

"How can I possibly say? But I hope that it may take place."

"Merci, Monsieur, for your courtesy," said the Duc, very courteously himself. "Now I in my turn must make my position clear to you. I had other views for my son—in fact I thought he . . . had other views for himself. I am, however, convinced that he is passionately in love with this lady, whom I doubt not I shall find to be all and more than all that he represents. But you know, Monsieur, that we French people do not look with favour upon marriages of love. We prefer

that love should come after marriage. We find it better so. Then there is the difference of race. To these young people that seems nothing now, but it tells, Monsieur, it tells more and more through life. This objection naturally applies on your side also ; not so the former, for you are more sentimental than we are." He was arranging two little groups of almonds with fingers as blanched as they.

" I seem to remember," commented Tristram, " that the Comte de Flahault, coming over to England, fell in love with an English lady and married her, and that they are living happily in Paris at this very moment."

" Quite true," said the Duc, with the air of one acknowledging a point, and he added another almond to the smaller pile. " But I cannot wholly allow the parallel. M. de Flahault was an Imperialist—an aide-de-camp of Napoleon in fact ; he is now an Orleanist, and the lady, she was titrée, noble in her own right, I believe, the Baroness Keats, or Keat, il me semble."

" Keith," said Tristram. " But surely I do not need to remind M. le Duc, who has, I understand, lived much in England, that many of the members of our best families bear no titles, that with us the grandson of an earl, not being the heir, is plain Mr. So-and-so, and that some of the oldest families have never had titles at all —have, indeed, refused them."

" That I know," conceded M. de la Roche-Guyon. " But it is not generally understood in France."

Tristram pushed away his wineglass. " You must not suspect me of flattery, Sir, if I say that I should have thought your own ancient and illustrious name capable of covering any disparity in station between the parties, did such exist. But I should wish to remind you that Mr. Grenville is by no means the ordinary

country parson that you have perhaps imagined. He is himself the younger son of a noble family ; he has connections among the highest of our English nobility, and he is no pauper. I can sketch you his family tree if you wish. . . . As for the lady herself, she would grace the most exalted rank, and, as a kinsman and an old friend, I think I have the right to say that the man who wins her is to be congratulated indeed."

The Duc lifted his eyes from the almonds and shot him a keen, rather disconcerting glance. " Ah, yes. You, Monsieur, the accredited ambassador, have espoused the match with warmth. How is it that M. Grenville then refused, in no uncertain terms, to entertain the thought of it ; indeed, so far as I could gather, forbade my son the house ? "

For a second Tristram was taken aback by this pertinent inquiry, for he had really forgotten the Rector's one time vehement opposition.

" I think," he said, " that you will find Mr. Grenville . . . in short, that that difficulty does not now exist."

The Duc leant back in his chair. " Will you permit me, Monsieur, to say (since I am a man so much older than you) that there is something in you, I know not what, which pleases me very much. I will be franker with you than I had meant to be. My mother, the Dowager Duchess, to whose judgment I pay great deference, is in favour of this match. I have learnt the fact but this morning. I own that I am surprised, but Armand is her favourite grandson. There are reasons, with which I need not trouble you, why her wishes should have great weight with me. I am, therefore, little likely when I see this lady, by all accounts so charming, to find her unsuitable. But what of M. son père ? It will not consort very well with my dignity (to

which you must permit me to hold) if I approve my son's choice only to find that M. Grenville does not approve his daughter's."

And in the gaze which he directed upon Tristram, in the tones of his thin, well-bred voice, there peeped out something of the arrogance of an ancient race.

The younger man smiled. He felt suddenly very weary.

"You need not apprehend anything on that score, I can assure you, Sir. I saw Mr. Grenville this morning. When your son first asked for his daughter's hand he was startled, greatly startled, and surprised. He probably spoke words which he would have recalled afterwards. You will find him, I think, more than reconciled to the idea."

The Duke seemed to have fallen into a short reverie.

"It is well to be young," he said at last, and there was faint regret in his tone. "The fire of youth—who shall give us that again? When I married my first wife, Emmanuel's mother, I was only twenty—but that was a mariage de convenance. Armand's mother was very beautiful; I loved her as Armand loves this lady, but he has the advantage of me . . . he has the advantage of me . . . for then I was no longer young." He sighed, and passed his handkerchief over his lips, and his face, deeply marked, seemed to wither and grow older than its sixty-five years. "But why am I talking thus to you, Monsieur, who still have that inestimable gift of youth? Mais tout passe, tout lasse . . . I will do myself the honour of calling upon Mr. Grenville to-morrow morning at eleven, if you think that hour will be convenient to him."

And he flicked with one long, polished nail at the two heaps of almonds, scattering them.

(2)

Not being present next morning at the momentous interview between the Duc and Mr. Grenville, Tristram could only guess at what happened. Armand, on fire with restlessness, spent the time walking round and round the not very extensive garden like a caged animal, and when Tristram went out to say that his father had returned and would like to see him in the study, he found the young man slashing with a stick at his rose trees.

"Oh, pardon if I have hurt them!" he exclaimed. "Mon Dieu, que je suis énervé! Yes, I will go at once. I had better have borrowed one of your horses and gone for a gallop.—He is in the study, you say, this good father of mine?"

The irony of Tristram's own position oppressed him the more in proportion as his anxiety about Armand's intentions was relieved. Neither the Duc nor his son said much when they emerged from their conference, only the elder man informed his host that he was to dine alone at the Rectory that evening, and that he hoped then to make the acquaintance of Miss Grenville. As good luck so ordered, a colleague of Tristram's on the bench turned up at dinner time and had to be asked to stay. Never had Tristram so blessed his boring but steady flow of conversation, nor so welcomed his presence, which effectually prevented Armand from pouring out his own hopes and fears.

There was no one, however, to save Tristram from the Duke's really enthusiastic praises of Miss Grenville when he returned from the Rectory, and expatiated on the gifts of heart and mind and person which he discerned in her.

"I shall keep that young rascal on tenterhooks a little longer," he declared. "Another sleepless night will not do him any harm, if he has had as many as he asserts. Besides, it is not absolutely arranged. With your permission, Mr. Grenville will come over here to-morrow morning to discuss matters with me. I will send Armand out; no doubt, even in this misty weather, his flame will keep him warm."

He kept his word, and next morning the Comte, refusing a horse, went soberly off on foot in the direction of the Downs. Mr. Grenville arrived; Tristram was unable, and did not indeed particularly desire, to make an opportunity of seeing him alone before he left him and the Duc to their discussion. The whole thing was getting dreamlike to him now, losing the outlines of its reality as the Downs had lost theirs with the death of summer. He would be glad when this whirl of conferences was over, the result—already certain—announced, and Armand de la Roche-Guyon no longer under his roof—not that he minded even his presence very much. How he should get on afterwards, from day to day, he did not know, but at present he seemed to himself a being without passions, energy, or desires—a mere leaf whirled on the engulfing stream of destiny, and the future was hardly worth speculating about.

He walked in his little orchard, for it was a morning gilded with the mellow brilliance of October, and noted the fallen apples. After a while, turning, he saw the Duc de la Roche-Guyon, his son and the Rector all coming over the grass towards him, conversing with an amiability which could have only one meaning. And dream-enveloped though he felt himself, leaf on the tide of fate though he might be, for a second Tristram saw nothing at all, neither figures, nor grass, nor sky, nor

the bricks of his house ; he was conscious only of a surging wave of rebellion that blotted them all out. Then they reappeared, and Armand, coming forward with both hands outstretched, said, in a voice of radiant happiness :

" Congratulate me, mon ami ! And ah, how much I owe it to you ! "

Next evening it was observed in Oriel Common Room that Dormer was unusually quiet. He withdrew earlier even than his wont, and while Newman and Hurrell Froude, going up their staircase, were commenting on the absence of light from his windows on the other side of the quadrangle, he was sitting by the fire, Tristram's read and re-read letter on his knee, and the half-bitter postscript of it running in his head, " Henceforward your fanatical ideas will easily carry the day with me. I shall never marry now." What he had dreamed of had come to pass—and his heart within him was desolate with pity.

CHAPTER XIV

MORNING on the Downs, with the clean, the thrilling wind, intoxicating even in autumn, the air that gives the sensation of a draught of the barest and intensest life, the air of the world's morning. Add to this youth, a good horse beneath you, and by your side, never henceforth to leave it, that one person who to you sums up the spirit of all these other things. What can Heaven give more ?

So, flashingly, thought Horatia, as she and Armand finished their gallop, and her green veil, outstreaming from her tall hat, fell to a position a little more composed. Laughing, a trifle breathless, " O, I should like to ride like this for ever ! " she exclaimed, as the horses fell to a walk. " It was glorious ! "

Armand de la Roche-Guyon, sitting his big brown mare with the ease of the born rider—a lover of whom any girl might be proud—bent on her a long and smiling look. " We shall often ride in Brittany," he said. " If the peasants know mythology—which I doubt—they will take you for Diane chasseresse."

Moving on, they came to the edge of the Downs, the great wind still blowing steadily upon them.

" There is Compton Regis, and there is Compton Parva," observed Horatia, pointing with her whip. " Do they not seem low from here? And—do you see? —that looks like Papa and Robin, deserting us and making off home." For the Rector, having ridden with

the affianced couple, for propriety's sake, as far as the Downs, had refused to come any further. The protestations which his action had drawn forth had been singularly lacking in fervour.

"I think," went on Horatia, "that before we have another gallop, you had better tighten my girth for me, if you will. . . . But what are you looking at, down there?"

"I was trying to distinguish the road on which you first came to me, like an angel of mercy," said the young man, swinging off. "And the spot where Mr. Hungerford's horse so inexplicably cast a shoe! By the way," he went on, pulling at the girth, "speaking of your cousin, ma toute belle, reminds me that I have long wanted to ask you——"

"My cousin!" broke in Horatia, laughing. "Whom do you mean?—That is tight enough, I think."

"Mais ce bon Tristram. He is your kinsman . . . or have you all been deceiving me?"

"Certainly he is my kinsman, but a very distant one. His mother was my mother's third cousin, or something of the sort. I never think of him as a cousin, exactly; rather as a brother."

"Not in any other capacity?" inquired Armand, his eyes mocking her as he leant against her horse's neck. "I have no right to ask you, perhaps—si, I think I have the right." He laughed. "If he were never in love with you, he ought to have been."

Horatia looked away from his amused, lazily penetrating glance. "To tell you the truth," she said, flushing a little, "he was once—years ago. But that is all over, and the proof is, that we have been very good friends ever since."

"Ah, I wondered. I am glad he had the good taste

to be a soupirant once. Were you very cruel to him? He is an original; but I am very grateful to him. Had he been a rival I should have found things much more difficult."

"No, you would not," said Horatia suddenly. "He would have behaved just the same, when he found that I really loved you."

The Comte lifted his expressive eyebrows. "Forgive me, my angel, but I am totally unable to follow you there. Men don't do those things nowadays; we are not in the pages of Scudéry. You have a soul of the most romantic, my Horatia, in spite of your Greek and Latin; but romance is not in harmony with facts. Your 'cousin' is a capital fellow, but if I believed him capable of that sort of thing, ma foi, I should be inclined to recommend him for a madhouse. As it is, shall we ask him to stay with us one day?"

"If you like," said Horatia, looking at her horse's ears. There was a vague trouble in her voice.

"If *I* like! But yes, that is perhaps what it comes to. I warn you, I shall be like a tiger for jealousy, and you will turn every man's head who sees you. . . . Par exemple, I am sure you must have had many more victims than you will acknowledge. Passe Mr. Hungerford, but what of that so dear friend of his at the college of Oriel?"

Horatia looked absolutely horrified. "Mr. Dormer!"

"Eh bien, why not? You shrink, my angel, as if I had suggested a thing improper, as though he were a priest—one of our priests. But he is not, and you must have met sometimes, and he is bel homme too, for all that austere air of his. Why, now I come to think of it, in Mr. Hungerford's very drawing-room——"

"I cannot conceive why he talked to me that evening,"

said Horatia. "I have often thought of it since. . . . But I will not be catechised about such absurdities. And suppose I were to insist on knowing how many fair ladies have been in love with you, Monsieur?"

"And pray, Mademoiselle, what would you think of me if I answered that question?" asked her betrothed, regaining his saddle. "Ask me how many *I* have admired, and some day—perhaps—I will tell you."

They rode on, talking of the—to French eyes—daring honeymoon that they were to spend, alone, at the Breton château, which had come to Armand through his mother. For, since they were to be married in England, nobody could prevent their going straight to Brittany after the tying, by civil as well as by double religious rites, of the triple knot which should, as Armand said, make the most beautiful hand in the world so very securely his.

(2)

Horatia was to stay in London with her aunt for some weeks previous to her marriage. The day before her departure, Tristram rode over to say good-bye. She was out when he arrived, but he was told that she would return shortly, and he went, he did not quite know why, into the garden, where he had so often sat and walked with her, where they had had so many discussions, where—to go back into a life that now scarcely seemed his own—he had run shouting as a boy, glad to escape from his lessons.

Nothing remained of the glory of the summer, not even the corpses of the hollyhocks and the great sunflowers. All had been tidily removed for burial. It would have been more consonant with the wintry misery

in his heart that those flowers which had witnessed his happiness should have been there still, black and withered, like his hopes. But the past seemed to have been neatly obliterated, for the Rector's gardener was very sedulous ; the whole place had cast off its last guest and was ready for a new—the winter. To welcome this a bush or two of Michaelmas daisies was in flower, and a robin was singing. And it came into Tristram's mind, a reminiscence of his year abroad, that in foreign countries they would be keeping the festival of the dead, for it was the second of November.

The garden was intolerable to him, yet he stayed there, walking up and down in the chilly twilight, because he was afraid that if he went in he would find that she had returned, and the moment of farewell would be upon him. For though he had promised her that he would be at her wedding—her threefold wedding—in London, this was to him the real parting. The other could not hurt after this.

At last he saw the comfortable form of Mrs. Martha Kemblet, Horatia's maid, coming towards him.

" Miss Horatia has just come in, Sir ; she's in the drawing-room."

" Thank you," said Tristram. " By the way, you are going to France with her, Mrs. Kemblet, are you not ? "

" Indeed I am, Sir," responded the faithful retainer with emphasis. She had been nurserymaid in the days of Horatia's childhood, had returned to the Rectory on her husband's death, and had successfully compassed the airs of the old family nurse. " My lamb shall have someone English about her in the midst of them jabbering foreigners." Evidently Mrs. Kemblet was not a fervent of the French marriage.

After all, their parting was unimaginably short. Perhaps he would not have had it otherwise.

She was standing in the drawing-room, when he got in, turning up a newly-lit lamp.

"Oh, my dear Tristram," she said, in a tone too matter-of-fact to be natural. "I am afraid that you have been here a long time, waiting. I am so sorry."

"I was in the garden," he answered. "I could well wait . . ."

"I shall see you in London?" asked Horatia needlessly, turning to the lamp again.

"Yes, without fail. But you will be so occupied then that I must tell you now what I want to say. It is only this . . . I want you to remember that if ever, at any time, you need me to . . . to do anything for you, I am always . . . I shall always . . ." Firmly as he had begun, he could not finish.

"You do not need to say that to me, Tristram," came her voice, very soft and moved. She still had her back half turned to him; the lamplight glanced through her hair. "I know it . . . I am not worthy of it. . . . You have been a friend more kind . . ." Then she too stopped, and put her hands over her face.

Tristram stood like a stone. He could not trust himself to go nearer. Moreover, the dark room, with its island of light and her at the heart of it, was threatening to turn round. Seconds passed; then he said more steadily, "I should very much like a memento of you —something you have worn. Is there anything you could spare?"

He saw her drop her hands to her throat and unfasten something—something which, still half turned away, she held out to him without a word. He went forward

to take it, and, dropping on one knee, kissed the hand that gave it to him, the hand lost to him for ever.

Then he found himself outside the room, and in his palm, warm from her throat, the little gold fibula, saucer-shaped and delicately worked, which she habitually wore. A thousand years ago it had clasped the cloak over the breast of a woman as beloved, perhaps, as she, but the heart that had once beat under it was not now more dust and ashes than his own.

BOOK II

BOOK II

GARISH DAY

CHAPTER I

(I)

A GREAT deal of wind made its entry with Armand and Horatia, and two dry leaves, scurrying gleefully over the polished floor, hurled themselves into oblivion under a chest. Roland the deerhound paced, very dignified, across the hall, and let himself down in front of the fire with a sigh. But his master and mistress lingered at the door, and when the tails of old Jean's livery had disappeared, Armand took Horatia into his arms and kissed her three times without a word. Then, hand in hand, like lovers and like children, they also crossed the hall to the fire.

"How I love coming in!" whispered Horatia. "Everyday it is different. Yesterday it was not so dark, but the portraits looked rather forbidding. To-day they are more friendly. Are they getting more used to me, do you think?" Her eyes ran along the row of observers.

"They are getting more jealous of you, I am afraid," said the young man, devouring her face, all aglow from the wind. "Unfasten your furs—let me do it. Not one of them was ever as beautiful as you." His hands shook a little as he unclasped the pelerine of marten skins. "How could they help but be jealous?"

The heavy furs slipped to the ground. "Am I beautiful?" asked Horatia, slim and straight and smiling. "I never used to be." She sat down in the great carved chair in front of the fire, and pulled off her gloves. "Tell me about them; tell me about her." She indicated the portrait over the hearth—the lady in flowing draperies, half reclining in a sylvan landscape, a Louis Quinze Diana, the goddess's crescent moon shining in her close-dressed powdered hair, and on her lips a narrow riddle of a smile that already haunted the newcomer.

"Another day," answered Armand, kneeling beside her. "She is not lucky, my great-great-grandmother. I think I will have her removed from here. Besides, there is only one thing that I can possibly tell you—that I love you, I love you . . . and that none of them was ever loved so much!" And, prisoning her hands, he kissed her.

Ancestors and ancestresses round the half-dusk hall looked on unruffled, having seen something like this not once nor twice in the centuries of their vigils, having most of them enacted it themselves—except that young man in wig and cuirass, faintly resembling Armand himself, who fell at Fontenoy before he could bring home his bride. But Roland was disturbed by something outside his comprehension, and getting up, he tried to thrust his nose between the two.

"O, Armand, he is licking me—he is eating me!" protested Horatia, who could not lift a hand to keep off the intruder. "Let me go, dearest; I must change my dress."

"But I like you in your furs," answered Armand, raising his head. His dark blue eyes sparkled. "I thought when we were walking together just now that

you should always wear them. They do something—I don't know what—to that incomparable hair of yours." He touched it. "Will you always wear your furs, to please me?"

"Silly boy!" retorted his wife. "And only two or three years ago there was such an outcry against the danger of wearing even cloth dresses instead of muslins indoors! What is more foolish than a man?"

"Nothing, indeed, but a woman," replied the Comte, gazing at her. "Well, I shall at least come and prescribe what you are to wear for me to-night."

"For you, Monsieur!" exclaimed Horatia. "Learn that I dress entirely to please myself! Adieu. Bring my furs." And slipping cleverly from her chair she was round it before he could get from his knees. If she did not actually run full-paced up the great staircase, at any rate she flitted up it with little of the dignity of a new-made wife. Armand, snatching up the pelerine, overtook her three stairs at a time.

(2)

That was part of the charm of those wonderful days, that Horatia found she could be a child, playing with another child. Armand was not only the most fervent of lovers; he was an enchanting playmate as well. It seemed to come naturally to him, like all he did, and Horatia was amazed to find how naturally it came to her also, who had never played much in her childhood, and who judged herself now, at twenty-four, so much too old for such high spirits. But there was no one of their own condition to witness them, and most of the servants were old and indulgent.

And not Armand only, but the house itself seemed to

conspire against Horatia's gravity. Had her imagination been nourished, like that of most of her contemporaries, on the pseudo-Gothic poetry of the *Annuals*, on the *Mysteries of Udolpho* or the *Tales of Terror and Wonder*, she might have been disappointed to find, in the château of Kerfontaine, neither drawbridge, portcullis, nor moat, neither battlements from which the heroine could espy the approach of her chosen knight, nor dungeons where a hero could languish, but only a residence of the time of Louis XIII, symmetrical, many windowed, tall-chimneyed, steep-roofed, with an atmosphere entirely unsuited to visors, palfreys, distressed damsels, falchions, or jongleurs. But the history she knew was different ; and here, in this house which had its own harmony, she could place the people who had really lived in it—ladies of the time of her admired Arthénice, and of Madame de Sévigné, and men who had rhymed in Paris with Voiture and fought with the great Condé at Rocroi. She was enchanted with the odd nests of tiny rooms, dressing-rooms, powdering closets, which squired all the bedrooms ; with the tall white doors, with the old pre-Revolution furniture, with the absence of carpets, with the long narrow gallery hung with armour ; with old Jean the butler, and young Françoise the laundry-maid, with the dinner service of St. Cloud, with the yellowed books on heraldry and hawking, with the thousand and one things which Armand showed her when they explored their domain. And she knew not whether she were most pleased to sit by the flaming log-fire in the hall, or in the salon, which opened out by a double flight of curving stone steps on to the lawn, a walk of cut lime-trees, and a carefully contrived view of the little pièce d'eau, or whether she preferred to walk in the garden, all dank

and flowerless as it was, and watch the leaves sailing on the surface of the water, the three decrepit Tritons blowing their soundless horns, and the little Florentine boy in the fountain pressing the captive dolphin which had not spouted for so many years.

And it was all hers, to do as she liked with. Sometimes she and Armand planned alterations, chiefly for the pleasure of the planning alone, for she would not rearrange even the drawing-room under the eyes—though they were so like Armand's—of that beautiful mother of his who smiled above the spinet, looking down over her shoulder in her yellow Empire gown. And Armand promised her new furniture ; but she did not want it.

There was indeed only one thing on earth that he would not promise her at present, and that was, not to go wolf-hunting. When first she heard a rumour of the existence of this sport in Brittany she did not believe it ; surely there were no wolves nowadays, and if there were, he would not be so unkind as to go after them and leave her. But she was doubly mistaken ; there were wolves, and savage wolves, as she discovered from questioning not only him, but the servants, and her entreaties quite failed to move him. He went . . . It was a day of long-drawn agony, and she was almost speechless with apprehension when at nightfall he returned, dirty, dishevelled, bloodstained, and full of the joyous fatigue of the successful hunter. Sobbing and clinging to him she reproached him with his cruelty to her ; he only laughed and kissed her, and next day she was able to admire his courage.

(3)

Full intimation had been given to Armand de la

Roche-Guyon from headquarters—in other words from his grandmother the Duchesse—that he and his bride must be in Paris for New Year's Day, that feast sacred to the ties of kindred. Before they left Kerfontaine, Horatia and he felt it incumbent on them to give a dinner-party for the neighbours on whom, as a newly-married wife, she had called, and Horatia therefore sat one morning in her boudoir writing out the invitations, while her husband, leaning lazily against her escritoire, made appropriate comments on each. A little snow had fallen, and lit up the room with its reflected light ; and Horatia, who loved snow, felt that only this was needed to add the last touch of glamour to her home.

" I think I know where everyone lives now," she said, laying down her pen. " By the way, Armand, whose is that rather large château in the classical style, which we passed when we were riding two or three days ago ? I forgot to ask you."

" You mean the ugly building on the way to Lanvaudan ? " inquired her husband.—" (Silly child, you have inked your fingers.)—That is Saint-Clair, which belongs to the Vicomtesse de Vigerie. She is away at present—in Italy, I believe."

" A widow, I suppose," commented Horatia, trying to rub the dry ink off her fingers. " Is she old or young ? It is a large place. Why have you never told me about her before ? "

" Because," answered Armand, with equal candour and cleverness, " I was within an ace or two of marrying her."

Horatia jumped. " O ! " she exclaimed. Her eyes opened wide at him, and she could find no more to say.

" At least," went on the Comte, with entire tranquillity, " that is what you will probably be told sooner

or later. And, after all, it is better that I should tell you myself."

Horatia was dumb. The yellowing paint of the panel behind Armand's head, with its impossible combinations of the flowers of every season, seemed to intensify the feeling of unreality.

"Did you . . . did you . . . ?"

"No, I did not. And I doubt if she would have had me in any case.—No, mon amie, your expression flatters me too much. But think, if I had! However, Providence sent me over to England in time . . ." His glance set Horatia's heart beating.

"Think, my angel," went on Armand, ticking off the links on his fingers, "think, if the King had not published the Ordonnances, there would not have been a revolution; if there had not been a revolution, His Majesty would not have fled to England; if he had not fled to England my father would not have accompanied him thither; if my father had not accompanied him I should not have gone over to see my father; if I had not gone over to see him . . ."

"O, did it need a revolution to bring us together!" cried Horatia, half laughing, half serious, for indeed effect and cause did not seem at that moment disproportionate.

"Or think," continued Armand, "that if my brother Emmanuel had not got to know that good Hungerford —what is it you call him, Tristan?—at the Embassy Ball . . ."

He went on developing his theme, but for a couple of seconds Horatia did not hear him. It passed over her, swift as the wind, that she had never so much as given a thought to Tristram since she left England—not so much as one thought.

" . . . So you see," she heard Armand concluding, "that it was very much an affair of chance, was it not ? "

And, coming back fully to the present, she realised that the half-jesting hypotheses were indeed playing round the fringes of truth. So very little—and they had never met !

" O my darling ! " she cried with a shudder.

(4)

Half-past five on her last day at Kerfontaine found Horatia, a trifle nervous, receiving her guests of the dinner-party, all of that class of country gentry forced by the modesty of their incomes to live on their little estates, and able but rarely to afford a visit to Paris. The ladies' modes were a little antiquated, and one old gentleman was even wearing powder. It was evident that all were curious to see the English bride.

Among the somewhat crude tones of the women's dresses and the old-fashioned coloured coats of the men, the village curé in his cassock was easily discernible, and him, to Horatia's momentary surprise, she found in the place of honour at her right hand when they were at last seated round the table. He was a little, snuffy old man, very noticeably of peasant origin, and not above relishing better fare than ordinary, for he looked with an appreciative eye upon the large piece of boiled beef in the middle of the table, and upon the other dishes round it, the roast mutton, the sweetbreads, the pâtes de cervelle. He was also, to Horatia's further surprise, served before any of the ladies, and made good use of his start.

" Madame la Comtesse is not Catholic ? " he asked after a while, turning on her a not unkindly gaze.

"No," answered Horatia, flushing a little. "I am English, you know, M. le Curé."

"It will come, it will come," said the old man, and he polished his plate strenuously with a bit of bread. Then, his utterance impeded by the sodden morsel, he added, "No doubt M. le Comte will get Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon to convert you."

Armand, looking very handsome, gay and debonair at the other end of the table, must have caught this stifled remark, for he flashed an amused glance at his wife. But the subject was not pursued, and the old Baron on Horatia's left hand, who had been all through the Chouannerie, and had left two fingers in it, began to discourse on the battle of Navarino, and after that the lady nearest to him desired to know of Horatia the motion of a steam-packet; oh, of course Madame had not come by Calais, but by sailing-vessel to St. Malo; and she actually preferred the long voyage? Incredible! . . .

The last couple had scarcely taken their leave before Armand gave a sigh of relief. "Are they not strange old fossils?" he inquired. "I think you can have nothing so curious in England. Some of these ladies have never been to Paris in their lives. . . . You shall give me sixteen kisses, one for each guest."

The due was in course of payment when the young man suddenly drew away with an ejaculation. "What, M. le Curé, are you still here?" For a short, stout, cassocked figure was standing under the crystal chandelier regarding them with approbation.

"I wished," said the old priest benevolently, "to give my blessing to you, M. le Comte, if you will permit it, and to Madame la Comtesse also—though as yet a

heretic—and so I retired until the others should be gone. But I have not heard what you were saying to each other; only I perceive that you are indeed a wedded pair, such as the Church approves, and I will give you the Church's blessing on your union. May it be sanctified with mutual love and regard, and made happy by many children, and ended only by a Christian death—*Benedicat vos Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus!*" He cut the air crosswise with his not overclean hand, and before the astonished couple could find speech, had hurried from the room.

"Mort de ma vie, he has an assurance, our old curé!" exclaimed Armand, staring after him. "Darling, do not look so startled; it is a sort of pious compliment. But I am glad that he had the tact to wait until the rest had gone; not but what they would have been edified by it. Ces dames are all as devout as even the heart of Prosper could desire."

"Prosper?" questioned Horatia doubtfully.

"My cousin the Monsignor, who is said to be going to convert you, little heretic. Not that it is necessary; you would go straight to Heaven anyhow; and there you would pray for your poor husband grilling in Purgatory, would you not?—Come and sit by the fire in the hall and confide to me the ideas of your Church on the future state. Ours, you know, are very consoling to sinners like myself!"

Armand had long ago stopped talking nonsense, and lay silent on the floor, his head in Horatia's lap. Her fingers wandered slowly among the dark, fine, and waving hair. To come back to this dear intimacy after the chatter was bliss too profound for speech. The fire began to sink; the deerhound sighed, fixing melancholy

eyes upon them, his nose along his paws, and Horatia, with the weight of Armand's body against her, felt that she should not know an hour more exquisite than this, which the great clock was tolling so relentlessly into eternity. And again she wondered why such happiness had been given to her, who had done so little to deserve it; for surely no woman before her had known so penetrating a joy!

Then suddenly she felt the gaze of the lady over the hearth, and looked up.

"I, too, have known," the enigmatical, half-closed eyes said to her—"and I have been dust and ashes these many years—and so shall you be, and so shall he." O, it was awfully, cruelly true! "Please God I die first!" she thought, and sliding her hand round Armand's neck kissed the head on her knee to register the hope.

Next morning, amid all the clatter of an early departure, she bent forward from the chaise for a last look at the place of so much happiness. The transient snow had melted, and the château stood as she had first seen it.

"I wonder shall I ever be so happy anywhere," she murmured. "Good-bye, dear house!"

"It appears to me," said Armand gaily, "that my wife is on theway to love the house better than its owner."

No articulate response was, naturally, required to this accusation, but after a moment Horatia said, still a little wistfully, "I wish it were not all over!"

"You belong to the Romantics, mon amie, that is clear," observed her husband, laughing outright. "And it is only just beginning." He drew her head down to his shoulder, and the horses sprang forward on the first stage to Paris.

CHAPTER II

(1)

CHARTRES, encircling its jewel of stone, was gone like the dreams which Horatia might have dreamed there the previous night if excitement had not kept her wakeful, and now, Versailles, Sèvres, and Passy left in turn behind the wheels of their chaise, she was entering Paris for the first time in her life. This was really the Seine that they were crossing, this river sparkling in the early afternoon sun of New Year's Eve, and the golden dome glittering in front of them was the Invalides. Streams of people were passing on the bridge as they crossed it.

"Ah, but wait till to-morrow," said Armand. "Yes, it is cheerful, but what an awful thing to look forward to is New Year's Day! Truly we French are the last of idiots to have made this annual giving of presents into a nightmare, as we have. And such presents, too! Last year inkpots were all the rage—inkpots in the shape of mandarins, of apples, of crayfishes—que sais-je? Everything you took up was an inkpot. Mercifully you could not put any ink in them. . . . Look, mon ange, there is one of the new omnibuses!—Here we are in the Rue St. Dominique already!"

But Horatia, instead of looking out, involuntarily closed her eyes. A momentary fear raced through her. She was going to live with these people who had hitherto only been names to her—that imperious old Dowager Duchess whose fat money-bags kept up the

position of the ancient, impoverished family, and Emmanuel, the elder brother, the heir, and his young son—and to make the acquaintance of the other relatives of whom she had vaguely heard. This was the real beginning of her new life. . . .

" O, hold me close, Armand ! " she whispered.

The chaise slackened, turned, and passed under an archway into a courtyard. Horatia had a fleeting impression of steps and a pilastered doorway, then she found Armand helping her to alight, and passed, on his arm, into a room of extraordinary loftiness and chill. A tall man was standing in the middle ; he came forward.

" Ma sœur, soyez la bienvenue ! " he said. " Tu permets, mon cher ? "

" Put up your veil," whispered Armand, and when Horatia had thrown back the lace over her bonnet, the tall man kissed her on the cheek. Evidently this was the Marquis Emmanuel.

Armand looked a boy beside him. He had dark hair going grey, a rather melancholy mouth, deeply furrowed at the corners, and eyes that were both troubled and kind.

" I hope that you will be very happy in this house, my sister," he said, with real warmth in his voice. " Our grandmother anxiously awaits the pleasure of your acquaintance, but she thought that you would prefer to repose yourself a little before she receives you."

There was consideration in this decree of the Duchesse's, but also some suggestion of an awful ceremony to come. Horatia thanked her brother-in-law.

" Yes, that will be best," agreed Armand. " Come, mon amie, and we will go to our apartments.—Tudieu, Emmanuel, I was forgetting that I had not seen you since August ! "

"And you are four months older!" said his brother, in a tone full of delicate implications, as they embraced.

(2)

When Horatia, supported in spirit, and also to a lesser degree in body, by her husband, entered for the first time the apartments of the Duchess Dowager, she knew that she had, in times past, rather over-estimated the strength of her own self-possession. Her knees shook, while biting phrases of his aged kinswoman's, repeated by Armand, came uncomfortably into her mind. However, there was nothing for it; the visit had to be gone through.

Her first impression was that the room was suffocatingly hot; the second, that it was not so large as she had expected; the third, that it had a bed in it—rapidly and not surprisingly following on this, the perception that the Duchesse was receiving, French fashion, in her bedroom. And she had, fourthly, the conviction that Madame la Duchesse Douairière de la Roche-Guyon was the most hideous object that she had ever seen.

The Dowager was enthroned in an armchair on the left-hand side of the fireplace. She wore a quilted négligé of puce satin, very formless; but on her head, whose scanty grey hair had been scraped up in the latest—and most appalling—of fashions, à la Chinoise, towered two enormous yellow ostrich feathers. Where the dressing-gown fell away from her withered neck it revealed the fire of a perfect river of diamonds, and she was painted in a style to recall the old days of the Palais Royal; on her small hands were grey kid gloves. Some sort of a dame de compagnie, sitting on the other

side of the hearth, rose, laid down the book in her hands, and melted away.

"Tiens, tiens!" then said in a high voice this human parrot (for as such she instantly struck Horatia). "So this is the English bride. Well, my dear, I am very glad to see you."

She held out her hand, and Horatia, rising from her reverence, supposed she ought to salute its kid covering, but the old lady, pulling her down, bestowed upon her a kiss. The tip of her large nose was exceedingly cold.

"Well, scapegrace," then observed Madame de la Roche-Guyon to her grandson, as he too kissed her, "what have you to say for yourself?"

"Only this," replied Armand smiling, and indicating Horatia.

"You probably get your penchant for red hair from your grandfather," remarked the Duchesse irrelevantly. "Sit down, ma fille; you must be tired." Her voice, though high, was, thought Horatia, the least disagreeable part of her. Armand pushed forward a chair, first removing from it a pack of cards, and Horatia sat down.

"And so you have been in solitary bliss, English fashion, at Kerfontaine?" said the old lady. "Quite alone, eh? No one for either of you to flirt with?"

"No one," responded Armand. "It is early days to begin that, grandmother."

"Ah, but there is always an old flame or two to mourn our marriage, is there not?" The malicious look which she shot at them with this remark might have been intended for either, but the very expressive frown which Armand bestowed on his jocular relative went unseen of Horatia, for he was standing behind her. It had, how-

ever, the effect of shaking a cackle of laughter out of the old lady.

"I am sure, my dear," she said, addressing herself to Horatia, "that you left a great many broken hearts behind you in England."

"Alas, Madame, not one, I fear," said the bride.

"Come, that is excellent, 'I fear,'" said the Dowager approvingly. "I thought you might have said, 'Thank God!' Armand, my good child, I think you might leave us. Madame la Comtesse and I will have a little conversation."

Armand came forward and kissed his ancestress's hand obediently, while she murmured something inaudible into his ear; and he went out, giving his wife a look that seemed to incite her to courage.

The Duchesse studied her granddaughter-in-law for a moment with her piercing eyes, and Horatia wondered in her turn how it was that, in spite of her appearance, she did somehow give the effect of having always been used to the very highest company.

"You look strong and healthy, my child," was her first observation, and so unmistakable was her meaning that Horatia blushed hot crimson.

"La la!" ejaculated the Duchesse, "we must not be prudish. When Armand's son is born he will be heir to my little estate in Burgundy. There are circumstances which prevent my settling it upon Armand himself. All my other property goes, of course, after his father, to that poor Emmanuel, as the eldest son, and to his ill-fated child."

(Why "poor" and "ill-fated," Horatia wondered.)

"I do not say," continued the Duchesse, with an appalling frankness, "that if you present Armand with many sons I shall be able to provide for them all. But

we shall see. And, of course, he has his mother's money. Did you like Kerfontaine ? "

" Very much indeed, Madame."

" It will be considered exceedingly improper, your spending your honeymoon alone there. But I," said the Duchesse, " did not raise any objections. I move with the times—in some things. If you marry an Englishwoman, you may, at the outset, be forgiven if you do as the English do. You can regard me as your friend, my fille, for I never opposed your marriage, as my son did." She showed her yellow teeth in a brief smile. " A little fresh blood—However, we need not go into that. By the way, you saw my son in England ? "

" Yes, I had the honour of being presented to M. le Duc," answered Horatia. "He was also at my wedding." Did or did not this loquacious antique look old enough to be the mother of that dignified elderly gentleman ?

" Emmanuel's wife, as you probably know, is in a mad-house," proceeded the Duchesse serenely, while Horatia literally and unbecomingly gaped. " It is not of much consequence, for she was a person without stamp or merit of any kind, but of course I am always expecting to hear that Claude-Edmond has been brought home raving from the Lycée some afternoon."

In after days, when Horatia had made the acquaintance of that singularly sane and demure child, she wondered how madness and he could be mentioned in the same breath. Now she was not even quite sure who Claude-Edmond was, and dared not ask. But the Marquis' melancholy mouth was explained.

" It was no fault on Emmanuel's part, I will say that for him," resumed Madame de la Roche-Guyon. " He was almost too model a husband ; I trust Armand will

make one half as good—but you must not expect too much of him, ma fille."

How little she knew Armand! But it was more politic not to show indignation, and Horatia only murmured that she would remember.

"That is well," said the old lady. "More ménages are wrecked by that than by anything else in the world." She paused, scanning Horatia, and the girl wondered what further gems of information or of counsel were about to fall from her shrivelled, rose-red lips. Her next remark, however, was the usual question:

"You are not a Catholic, my child?"

"No, Madame," answered Horatia, saying to herself, "Now she will bring out the family Monsignor to convert me."

But the Duchesse did not; she merely said, "Well, it is the best religion to die in; but, meanwhile, there are other things more amusing. . . . My dear, would you have the goodness to ring the bell for my maid? . . . No, I will get it myself. Wait here!" She got out of the chair with no great difficulty, and, hobbling across the floor, disappeared.

Now that its chief ornament was removed, Horatia became conscious of many other things in the room; of the little Italian greyhound in a basket near the fire, hitherto hidden by the Duchesse's person; of two very gallant, though scarcely indecent, coloured engravings of the last century in a corner facing her, immediately above a print of one of Rubens' Last Judgments—a singularly edifying conjunction. But the room was so crowded with objects that it was hard to fix the eye on any one in particular, and it took Horatia several visits before she knew that a row of shrouded objects on short stands were Madame de la

Roche-Guyon's wigs—for she did not usually appear in her own hair—and that she habitually kept her false teeth, when out of action, in the priceless little box of Limoges enamel, representing the Flight into Egypt, which now caught Horatia's attention on a side table. Her diamonds, on the other hand, were frequently tied up in a soiled handkerchief.

Then the Duchesse came back, and Horatia rose. The Dowager had perhaps been rummaging in some obscure corner, for one of the feathers was very much awry. But she possessed an awful majesty, short, ludicrous, and (at the moment) amenable as she was.

"Here, ma fille, is something for you," she said, putting into Horatia's hands an old green leather case. "Open it!"

The bride did so. Inside, on a dark and shabby lining, a row of magnificent pearls made moonlight.

"O, Madame," gasped Horatia. "I could not! they are too . . ."

"Nonsense, child," said the old lady, pinching her arm. "You like them, I see. You will not see any finer at the Tuileries—not that you'll ever go there now. I always meant them for Armand's wife. They would look well in that hair of yours, too. There are earrings, but I could not put my hand on them. Try these on! They belonged to my sister, the Comtesse de Craon, who was guillotined in '93, and I did not recover them till the Restoration."

"Guillotined!" exclaimed Horatia, startled. How was it possible to speak about it in that matter-of-fact tone! And the pearls—in whose hands had they been —round whose neck . . .?

"Naturally," answered Madame de la Roche-Guyon calmly. "All my family were, I was in prison myself

till Thermidor. Well, perhaps you would like Armand to put them on for you. You can tell him that you are to have the emeralds when—you understand perfectly well what I mean ! "

(2)

Horatia wore the pearls, at her husband's request, for the family gathering on New Year's Night. She said afterwards that they gave her courage, as proving her an adopted member of the gens, but when, at the conclusion of her toilet, Armand had clasped them round her neck, she declared that she felt more anticipatory terrors than had ever their owner on the way to the guillotine.

" Very likely," said Armand, in high spirits, walking round her approvingly. " If my lamented great-aunt was like my grandmother I do not suppose that she was in the least afraid of La Veuve. . . . You look charming ; I like that dress."

" Armand," said poor Horatia, " this is certainly worse than the guillotine. Supposing Madame la Duchesse does not approve of me to-night ; supposing that all your relations think me foreign or dowdy. I am sure their dresses will be quite different from mine."

" Their coiffures may be," agreed the young man. " Some of them will wear their hair à la Chinoise and look like Hurons ; you must try not to laugh. (And let me warn you, chère amie, that if I see you disfiguring your beautiful hair by adopting that style, I shall desert you on the instant.) Have you remembered all my other warnings ? Do not forget that though my aunt des Sablières is very deaf she cannot bear to be shouted at ; that if Charles X is mentioned, Madame de Camain will

probably burst into tears. Somewhere in the dim past the Comte d'Artois was—well, flirted with her. Do not talk of English admirals, ships, or sailors to the old Comte de Fezensac; he lost an eye at the siege of Gibraltar in 1779. Above all remember to speak of the Duc de Bordeaux as Henri V; you would do well to refer occasionally to the Duchesse de Berry as the Regent, for my father writes that she will shortly be made so. As you cannot disclose anything derogatory to Louis-Philippe you had better not mention him at all. You must be friendly with my cousin Eulalie de Beaulieu, for she will serve as your chaperon on occasions. I think that is all." He pulled up his high cravat, glanced at himself a moment critically in the long glass, and said to Horatia, "My darling, a little fright becomes you amazingly. . . . Let us go to the scaffold!"

CHAPTER III

(1)

If Kerfontaine had been to Horatia a kind of fairy castle, the Faubourg St. Germain resembled a land half savage, half enchanted, something between the domains of Haroun al Raschid and the country round the Niger, a place full of the oddest customs, and demanding considerable intrepidity in the explorer. The tribal gathering on New Year's Day had been alarming, but its members were kinder to her than she had expected. Afterwards, her chief impressions were: of faded dowagers, condescending or cold; of Madame la Marquise de Beaulieu, a cousin of Armand's and her destined chaperon, a high blonde of thirty-five or so, coiffée à la Minerve, wearing a sky-blue velvet dress encircled at the knees with a row of pink feathers; of a little creeping old lady, as grey as dust, Mlle Claire de la Roche-Guyon, some remote kinswoman of the Duke's, who lived in the Hôtel; of men, old or middle-aged, and extremely courtly and gallant; of two or three youths, and a small boy of eleven, Claude-Edmond, the "ill-fated" heir, quiet and extraordinarily self-possessed, who, oddly enough, did not live in the house, but boarded with a tutor near the Lycée Louis-le-Grand—and of a tall, grey-haired priest with a young face, Monsignor Prosper de la Roche-Guyon, a striking figure in his cassock touched with purple, though ecclesiastical garb had been unsafe to wear in the streets since

the Days of July. Dominating all was the Duchesse in her chair, crowned with a toupée in lustre like sealskin, in hue like the pelt of a fox, accepting graciously the offerings of her descendants—from one, the latest clock, Queen Blanche in gold reclining on a seat, whereon were marked the hours ; from another, such an inkpot as Armand had described, in the form of a crocodile ; from an undiscriminating but inspired great-nephew, one of the newest parasols with eye-glasses in the handle. And, though the Dowager scarcely ever went out, she was pleased with this gift ; while a highly suitable foot-basket, lined with violet velvet and trimmed with chinchilla, drew from her the snorting exclamation, that the donor evidently regarded her as decrepit. It was a thoroughly matriarchal scene . . .

Ere a couple of weeks had passed, Horatia had both learnt and done many things. She had had, first of all, her visites de noces to pay ; the earliest of these had been to the oldest inhabitants of the Faubourg St. Germain, the aged dowagers who never stirred from their armchairs, but whose word was still a power. To them, as to some elders of a tribe, a bride must always be taken for ten minutes' inspection ; by them were the frankest of opinions expressed on her looks and gait, on eyes and teeth. Three of these ancients, in succession, having pronounced of Madame la Comtesse de la Roche-Guyon that " elle était tres bien," Horatia was thenceforward established upon a proper footing.

She soon learnt, also, how many more visits she would have had to pay but for recent political events. (Those events, too, had disposed of the question of her presentation at Court, which would otherwise have taken precedence of all else.) Half the ladies of the Faubourg—or at least of the ultra section of the Faubourg—had

shut up their hôtels, countermanded all their orders at the shops, and reclaiming from their maids, so it was said, their last year's dresses and hats, had gone to endure the martyrdom of a winter in their châteaux in the country, hoping thereby to ruin an ungrateful and disloyal Paris. Of those remaining Horatia found that she might only know the elect, the ultras, the "Carlistes," the "Dames de la Résistance," those who, in the expressive phrase of the day, were "sulking"—those who had not and never would bow the knee to Baal in the person of Louis-Philippe and the Orleanist monarchy. One or two former friends of the Duchesse's were reported to be among the "Dames de l'Attente," those who waited to see how the wind blew; they had already been scratched off that lady's visiting list. And one—O horror!—had gone over to the "Dames du Mouvement," and had been received in the house of Rimmon at the Palais-Royal (for Louis-Philippe had not yet migrated to the Tuileries). Of all objects in any way connected with her—her old visiting-cards, a forgotten pair of gloves, and what not—there had been, so Armand assured his wife, a solemn auto-da-fé in the Dowager's bedroom.

But some of the receptions which she was allowed to attend were to Horatia rather trying. Not Semiramis nor Catherine of Russia could have presented a more imposing front, nor have swayed a more despotic sceptre, than Madame la Princesse de Ligniville, with her little red-bordered eyes, her false front of fair hair, her dropsical corpulence, who, seated almost immoveably in her green damask armchair in her famous library of lemon wood, and surrounded by a throng of politicians, received her one evening. Madame de Ligniville could never have had any prétensions to

beauty, yet for years she had exercised an absolute dominion. She was very well read, by no means religious, lively and sarcastic, and devoured with a passion for politics. Horatia, as well as being somewhat terrified of the great lady herself, felt lost among these political lights, whose names she did not even know. The lemon-wood library was not a salon—it was a throne-room.

There was, indeed, one salon which surprised Horatia by its unlikeness to the rest, that of the Duchesse de Montboissier. Here seven ladies of varying ages, from eighty to eighteen, sat round a table lit by a hanging lamp and did fancy work while they chattered to their guests—and these were some of the bluest blood in France. The conversation was lively, natural, and totally devoid of any intellectual interest, circling round tales of the day and fashions, and interspersed with scandal. The old Comtesse de Montboissier-Saligny, who presided, contributed indeed anecdotes of a kind highly unsuited to the ears of her youngest granddaughter. Horatia commented on this afterwards to the Marquise de Beaulieu, her companion on this occasion.

" Que voulez-vous ? " asked that lady. " It was not the fashion to be prudish at the time of the emigration, and the Comtesse, by all accounts, was by no means averse to the society of the gallant abbés and worldly prelates of the days before '93. But you must not think, ma chère," she added, " when you hear these old dames telling racy stories, that their own morals are questionable. The more free their tongues, the more irreproachable, probably, their past conduct. One must have some compensation. Our own respected grandmother, for instance, makes even my hair stand

on end sometimes. But I am sure she has always been discretion itself."

Horatia did not like the Marquise de Beaulieu.

(2)

By the beginning of February, Horatia was beginning to feel much more at home in her new surroundings. She knew what milliners to frequent, and frequented them a good deal; she, whom the question of clothes had always rather bored, and whose well-dressed appearance in the past had been due chiefly to her father's wish and the excellence of her dressmaker, now spent hours in choosing a hat, days in deciding between the attractions of drap d'Algers and soie de chaméléon, between the becomingness, as colours, of Poland earth, wood violet, lie de vin, and souris. Rightly to accompany the fashionable hats, her hair must be more elaborately dressed than Martha's fingers could accomplish, so Martha made way in this respect for one Joséphine. Armand had admired her pose, the turn of her hand and wrist one afternoon when he had found her doing embroidery, so she gave herself assiduously to embroidery. All these avocations took up an immense amount of time. Her days seemed very full. She never opened a book, nor missed those once-constant companions; the case of them which she had brought with her was not even unpacked. If she had not Armand always to talk to, she had him to dress for, for the hours she spent before her mirror, the afternoons she fleeted in Herbault's shop, were far, very far, from being ends in themselves.

Horatia's was indeed the exaggerated fervour of the convert. She looked back now on that blind and self-

complacent person who, in the Rectory garden, only a few months ago, had wondered about her married friends "how can they!" Armand had come, and in a moment of time she had realised "how they could." Like all converts she had turned against her old life, and found nothing good in it at all. She would gladly have burned that which she once adored. For this glorious thing was love, and in her ignorance she had jeered at it; could a life-long repentance and years vowed to the joys she had once derided ever atone for her neglect? Her books, the tastes that she had shared with her father and Tristram, all these things were hollow and useless, for love had called to her, and she had answered. Henceforward she would go singing through the world with Armand, always with Armand. Together they had found and would keep the divine secret.

Together, at least, they saw Paris. He showed her sometimes the Paris of history in general, sometimes the Paris of his own history. For, wonderful and almost terrible as it was to stand on the site of the guillotine in the great Place, to shudder in the narrow cell of the Conciergerie that had held Marie Antoinette, to walk down the street where Henri IV had met his death, it was even more wonderful to think that for twenty-six years this other self of hers had inhabited the fortunate city—and that she had not known it. So her husband, laughing at her, had to show her the haunts of his boyhood, the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, where he had been an externe, the little private pension in the Rue d'Enfer where he had boarded, even the academy at which he had learnt to fence and to ride. Pursuing her researches into this delightful region of the past, she discovered that Armand had previously had a private tutor, who, in order more easily to lead an unruly pupil in the paths

of learning, had invented a method of combining amusement and instruction on their walks abroad. Hence the Champs Elysées were sacred to her because here the youthful Armand, taken to watch other children playing at ball, learnt the laws of gravity, and she could not see the old soldiers stooping at bowls under the trees of the Invalides without remembering that this sight had served to illustrate, to his childish mind, the double law governing the movements of a spherical body propelled along the ground.

When they drove or walked together, passers-by sometimes turned smiling to bestow a glance on so much youth and happiness. Horatia was sure that Armand's good looks were the magnet; he affirmed that it was hers, or the fact that she was English. This she would deny, asserting that she was now indistinguishable from a Frenchwoman. But one day, in a perfumer's, before she could even open her mouth, the owner of the shop had pushed forward divers bottles of English manufacture, had offered her "Vindsor soap" and Hunt's blacking, and had shaken out before her a silk handkerchief with a portrait of O'Connell in the middle of it. Armand, delighted at her confusion, immediately led her to a neighbouring pastry-cook's, displaying the legend "Here is to be had all sorts of English pastry," and speaking, by notices in its windows, of such insular delicacies as "hot mutton pies," "oyster patties," "Devonshire cider," and "Whitbread's entire." "We are suffering from Anglomania at present," he explained, "and everything English is deemed 'romantic,' so you need not, my angel, pretend to be French."

The magic word brought to Horatia's memory a young man whom she had seen a few days ago walking gloomily in the garden of the Luxembourg, a young man

evidently aspiring to the aspect of "l'homme fatal," with open shirt collar, tumbled black hair, wild, melancholy eyes, and smile of conscious bitterness, in whom she recognised a product of the new French Byronism. Although she hoped in time to meet some of the adherents of this school, she was secretly glad that Armand was not of its type.

Thus they visited the Jardin des Plantes and the Boulevards, Notre Dame, the still unfinished Arc de Triomphe, the pictures in the Louvre, and (not altogether willingly on Armand's part) M. Sommerard's collection of mediæval antiquities in the Rue Mesnars.

(3)

Horatia was destined also to see Paris under a less smiling aspect.

An air as mild as milk, a sun almost of May, saluted her on the morning of the fourteenth of February, as Armand helped her from the family coach outside St. Germain l'Auxerrois. She was going into that church, of name ominous to Protestant ears, to hear her first Mass, and that a Requiem—the Requiem for the Duc de Berry, murdered in 1820, and father of the little boy whom all good Legitimists now regarded as their King. The occasion was therefore gloomy, but it was also exciting; though Horatia was clad in black she had no grief in her heart for an assassinated prince whom she had never seen, and though during the drive she had composed her features to a decent melancholy, she was secretly attacked by mirth at the overpoweringly funereal aspect of the Duchesse. It was an event when that lady left the Hôtel; and she had left it now swathed in crape, a-dangle with jet chains, and—unprecedented mark of mourning—devoid of her toupée. A large black

rosary depended from her wrist. Armand and the Marquis sat opposite. Emmanuel had his usual air of sad patience ; he was in fact the only one of the four who looked perfectly appropriate to the occasion (since the Dowager was merely ludicrous), yet Horatia knew that his Royalist sentiments were the least strong of all his family. Armand, his head thrown back against the brown silk lining of the vehicle, directed from time to time a glance at Horatia between his half-closed lids. He looked very well in black. From time to time also the Duchesse speculated on the likelihood of there being a riot ; it was true that nothing of the sort had occurred on the 21st of January, the anniversary of the death of Louis XVI, when there had also been a Requiem ; moreover the Government was forewarned. However, the fact that the ceremony had been forbidden to take place at St. Roch looked, she said with some unction, suspicious. It was plain that the old lady had no objection to the idea of a tumult, and perhaps even pictured herself as a martyr to the throne and the altar.

There were already two rows of emblazoned carriages on either side the church ; a few curious sightseers, the usual beggars. The portals were hung with black. The Duchesse, on Emmanuel's arm, hobbled towards them ; the leather door squeaked, Armand caught it from his brother, and they were inside. The Comte dipped his finger in the holy-water stoup and held it out half-smiling to his wife ; finding, however, that she had no idea what he intended her to do, he crossed himself carelessly and preceded her up the aisle. The Swiss (whose semi-martial appearance Horatia supposed to be peculiar to this particular ceremony) having found seats for the Dowager and the Marquis, waved them into two chairs just behind.

The church too was hung with black—Horatia had never imagined an effect so gloomy. It was already nearly full of bowed, sable figures. In the middle of the nave was a great black-draped catafalque surrounded by enormous candles; the Bourbon arms glinted on the top, and at the end hung a large wreath of immortelles.

And the Mass began—but Horatia paid small attention to what, after all, she could not follow. Rather she came increasingly to realise that this was history. The old white-haired priest of whom she could catch glimpses at the altar, had, so they said, taken the last consolations of religion forty years ago to the murdered Queen; now he was praying (so she supposed) for the soul of the murdered Prince, her nephew. "Dona ei requiem," sang the choir, and it became impossible for her not to fancy that the Duc de Berry's actual body lay under the pall.

(4)

The Mass was finished, or nearly finished, Horatia conjectured, for people were moving their chairs about, when something was passed from hand to hand along the row in front of her—a paper of some kind. The Duchesse, when it came to her, kissed it; the Marquis Emmanuel glanced at it a moment and then, slightly turning, passed it to his brother behind him. And Horatia, looking at it with her husband (and having imagined it to be some holy relic) saw only a coloured lithograph of a boy about ten years of age, wearing a crown and a royal mantle.

"The Duc de Bordeaux—Henri V," whispered Armand, and he passed it on. Evidently there were other copies going round the congregation, for a moment

or two later Horatia saw a young man in the uniform of the National Guard walk up to the catafalque and affix one to the end, just above the wreath of immortelles. A murmur rippled through the congregation, then chairs scraped in all directions, and half a dozen ladies heavily veiled, and one or two men, were out of their places detaching the flowers, which, after kissing, they placed in their bosoms or their paroissiens. More came, till the catafalque was the centre of a crowd, and it took Emmanuel a long time to get the flower for which his grandmother asked him. Progress down the church was equally difficult, and Armand and Horatia became separated from their elders, who were in front. At the door there was difficulty in getting out and a sound of loud voices, and when they did at length emerge it was into the midst of a vociferating and hostile crowd.

"Take tight hold of my arm!" said Armand. "No, it is all right—they will not dare to touch us, the canaille!" And indeed they got through to the coach without much difficulty, except for the press of bodies. Threats were flying about, but nothing else, and Horatia was really more thrilled than frightened. Emmanuel was at the door of the coach, and opened it; Horatia, relinquishing Armand's arm, put her foot on the step. A man, slipping at that moment round the horses' heads, shouted something almost in her face; startled, she missed her footing on the high step, slipped and half fell into Emmanuel's arms, and was by him pushed into the coach, but not before she had a glimpse of Armand, white with fury, striking out at the man's face. The man went down; she stumbled into the coach, saw the Marquis catch his brother by the arm, and somehow, in the midst of cries, the two men also were in, the door was banged and the coach started.

It had all happened in a moment, and here was Armand, with blazing blue eyes, leaning forward with her hands in his, beseeching her to tell him that she was not hurt, that the scoundrel had not really touched her.

"No, no," reiterated Horatia. "He did not mean to, I am sure. It was my stupidity . . . I slipped."

"Take my vinaigrette, child," said the Duchesse, fumbling among her blackness and beads.

"My sister was not frightened," observed the Marquis quietly. It was true; but Armand continued to breathe out slaughter all the way home.

"Well, it is over now," said the Dowager as they turned into the courtyard, "and you need not work yourself into a fever, mon petit."

But it was not over, it was only beginning. Late that afternoon came the news that the mob was breaking into St. Germain l'Auxerrois and pillaging it, smashing the glass, the statues, the pictures, the confessionals, all to the accompaniment of parodies of the services, in the vestments of the church. The great iron cross with the three fleurs-de-lis, which surmounted the building, was pulled down by order of the mayor of the district, destroying the organ in its fall, and by night one of the chef d'œuvres of the Renaissance was merely bare walls and a heap of debris. Thus did the people of Paris testify their objection to the Legitimists.

On the Legitimists fell also the displeasure of the government, who, instead of proceeding against the rioters, arrested a prominent Royalist or two and issued warrants against the Archbishop of Paris (who was in hiding) and the curé of St. Germain l'Auxerrois. The Duchesse, not from nervousness, but rather from the joy of battle, ordered the great gates of the Hôtel de la

Roche-Guyon to be closed and barricaded. But the Faubourg was quite quiet, though hundreds were howling outside the minister Dupin's house in the Rue Coq-Héron. And there were rumours that the mob had publicly given itself rendez-vous for the next day outside the Archbishop's palace.

On the morrow, therefore, Armand, unmoved by his wife's entreaties, sallied forth to see what was afoot. He was away about an hour and a half, a time that seemed to Horatia as long as the whole day of the wolf-hunt in Brittany. When, to her inexpressible relief, he returned, he announced that there was not a stone left of the Archevêché, that even the iron railings were gone, all the books and furniture in the river, and that the rioters were threatening Notre-Dame itself.

But it passed, that brief sirocco of popular fury, and Paris was gay again—had in fact been gay all the time, after the manner of Paris (seeing it was carnival-tide), though, or perhaps because, the richest ecclesiastical library in France was voyaging down the Seine, and the maskers on the quays were amusing themselves by trying to fish out the Archbishop's furniture from the stream.

CHAPTER IV

(1)

"THEN, if you please, Sir, will you have dinner at a quarter after six?" suggested Mrs. Thwaites. "Mr. Dormer can hardly get here before six o'clock."

Tristram glanced at the leaden sky. "I am afraid that he will not be here then if we have snow, as seems probable. We had better say half-past. You will see that there is a good fire in his room, Mrs. Thwaites? He is ill, you know."

When she had withdrawn he got up from his writing-table and poked his own fire. It was ten o'clock on a morning late in February. In eight or nine hours Dormer would be here. And after dinner they would sit by the fire, and, if his friend were not too tired by the journey, perhaps he could have the relief of talking to him a little—or, if not that, at any rate the comfort of being with him, as on that day at Oxford. He was intensely anxious to see how he was, for about the beginning of December Dormer's headaches had become of alarming severity, and he had been ordered away from Oxford at a day or two's notice. Having spent the vacation and more at his brother's house at Colyton, he had now been to London to consult a well-known physician, and was at this moment on his way to Compton Parva.

Tristram stood a moment with his elbow on the mantelpiece, passed his hand once or twice over his

eyes, and with a short, quick sigh went back to his letters.

As a watcher by the crisis of fever is cut off from all else, untouched by the life of every day that surges round the house but is powerless to enter it, unconcerned at great calamities, unresponsive to great joys, so, until Horatia's wedding-day, had it been with Tristram Hungerford. He was watching the last moments, as it were, of the person he loved best on earth. He did not care that the whole country was in a state of ferment, that the agricultural riots were spreading all over the south, and that men were being hanged for them, that there were tumults in London, nor even that in mid-November Wellington and Peel resigned and were succeeded by a Whig ministry under Lord Grey—which meant Reform. If the strain reached its acutest point on the evening that he said farewell to Horatia in the drawing-room at the Rectory, it was nevertheless prolonged, with very little alleviation, until the day that he stood behind her at the altar, and the vigil was over. Some means of relief indeed he had, for he prayed as he had never prayed before, fierce and desperate daily prayers for strength to endure; and he knew, too, at any rate, that his own life and circumstances would be changed by his ordination. More, he even saw, in the interval before the wedding, when Horatia was gone from Compton, a real ray of comfort in that prospect; there was still something he could do in life.

Then had come the marriage in December, the triple marriage. And after that a numbness and a merciful fatigue fell upon him for a while. He had returned with Mr. Grenville to Berkshire and taken up his ordinary occupation. Nearly every day he went over to see the old man, and Horatia's spaniel leapt up at him, and he

sat in the rooms which would know her no more. It seemed to him sometimes that he was always there, to such an extent did Mr. Grenville lean on him. But so mortal a weariness had laid hold of him, body and mind, that he could not fully taste the pain. He often fell asleep in the middle of the morning, alarming Mrs. Thwaites. At night he slept long and almost dreamlessly. One waking dream pursued him indeed, for once again he stood behind Horatia in the little French Roman Catholic chapel in King Street, with its memories of banished royalty and the emigration, and in front of him was a figure in white silk and swansdown, with wired orange flowers, that shook when she moved, upon her deep satin bonnet, and with the long veil of a bride. At the time he had derived some self-control by pretending that it was someone else. "*Ego conjungo vos in matrimonium, in nomine* . . ." he heard the words. too, in the unfamiliar pronunciation of the old French priest, and he saw the altar with its four pillars and canopy and some dark picture that he could not distinguish, and the strange little gallery beside it, and the Rector, looking old and bowed, and the Duke . . . and another figure. Neither the civil marriage at the Embassy nor the more familiar ceremony at Margaret Chapel remained with him like this . . . and this, he supposed, would wear itself off his brain in time ; he was too tired to wrestle with it.

This state of blurred consciousness continued till about the middle of December. Then one day, quite suddenly, the fatigue, the mental mist, seemed to lift, and brighter and sharper than before the picture shone before him. And gradually it came to him what it meant. He was in love with another man's wife. He could not present himself for Orders. The straw of

comfort to which he had clung was swept away, and now he saw, or thought he saw, the tarnished motives which had made him look forward to his entrance to the priesthood. It was not wonderful that Dormer's coming meant much to him, for he could not write about these things—he was not even sure that he could bring himself to talk about them.

(2)

The two friends each suffered a shock at dinner, for Tristram saw, in the full candle-light, how ill Dormer looked, and Dormer noticed that in two months Tristram had begun to grow grey at the temples.

But they talked during the meal of other things. Once settled in the study before the fire, however, Tristram began without preamble.

"Now, Charles, I want to hear exactly what the doctor says."

"Oh, the usual silly sort of thing that can never be carried out," replied Dormer with a weary smile. "If I were a farm labourer and lived out of doors and did not use my brain, I should never have another headache."

"But, seriously, doesn't he think you any better for these weeks at Colyton?"

"Not permanently, if at all." Dormer stirred his coffee. "The worst of it is that I'm almost afraid that he is right in what he says."

"What does he say—beyond the farm labourer idea?" asked Tristram anxiously.

"He says that I cannot think of going back to work this term; that if I do, I shall have a bad breakdown, and it may be years before I am able to write another word."

Tristram's heart sank.

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Well, there isn't much choice for me," responded his friend sighing. "He recommends, I might say he orders, a voyage."

And as Dormer struck Tristram as being extraordinarily submissive to this decree, Tristram was proportionately alarmed. But he concealed this fact, and merely said, "So he recommends a voyage, does he? Where to?"

"The Mediterranean."

"That," said Tristram with decision, "is where I have wanted to go all my life. I shall come with you."

"You!" exclaimed Dormer, a gleam of animation on his face. "I only wish it were possible. But how about your ordination? Would it be worth while for you to come for part of the time? I admit I had thought of you."

And in this confession he was certainly not overstepping the mark, having indeed schemed to get Tristram away at once from his present surroundings, so full of painful memories, but not having hoped that Tristram would himself jump at the idea.

"Certainly it would be worth it," replied his friend. "Besides, there is no hurry about my ordination . . . This is a godsend to me. Now tell me what you have done. What about Rose and the Councils?"

"Rose is arranging for Newman to do them," replied Dormer. "He offered to wait for me, but I should not like the work to be delayed on my account. Newman knows as much about the subject as I do—probably more. But there is a great deal of reading to be done, and I should not be fit for that under a year. Of course I know that he is overworked as it is, and doesn't sleep

well, but as he sees the importance to the cause that this particular book should not be delayed, he will drop something else. So that is settled."

Tristram vented his feelings without mercy on the fire. "I'm sorry to hear it," he observed very shortly. "I think Rose might have waited."

"I knew you would feel like that," said his friend with a half-amused smile that ended, despite himself, in a sigh. "Let's leave it alone . . . About yourself —I don't understand what you said about your ordination?"

"Oh, never mind that now," said Tristram, abandoning the poker. "I never did like those Cambridge men! —Suppose we go to bed."

As Tristram, later, sat stretched out alone by the fire, he was realising acutely what it must mean to Dormer to give up the work on which he had entered with such hopes, and, quite unreasonably, he felt that he hated Rose and Newman, although he knew quite well that Dormer must have over-ridden both of them. It was just like him. Life was a sorry place. As for his own troubles, how could he, with Charles looking like that, risk keeping him awake by talking about them. It was not his sympathy that he wanted, for that he knew he had always, under its veil of more than ordinary reserve, but his counsel. So badly did he want the latter that it seemed an aggravation to have him in the house and to be silent, to know that if he went upstairs now he could have it—at a price for the giver. But he had not so learned friendship.

(3)

Yet, after all, Dormer was not asleep. The fire to which Mrs. Thwaites had paid special attention was burning with the disturbing brilliance which comes to a fire when one is in bed and desires the dark, and, lying wakeful, he watched it leaping on the faded chintzes. And he, too, was going through a dark hour.

The austerity of Charles Dormer's religion was the measure of its passion. Knight and lover, he was set upon a quest, whereof the road was holiness, and the end—God. And that he might not follow wandering fires he had looked back for guidance to the first ages of the Church, to the training of the confessors and martyrs, who had learnt of the divine pattern from those who had themselves seen the Lord. In this school of character he found no comfortable complacency, no sickly sentimentality, but hardness, and reality and the cross.

From a boy, just as he had been sure that he was called to serve God as a priest, so had he been certain that he would never marry. It fitted in, therefore, with his own instinct when he came to realise that the Fathers had given honour to those who lived the life of sacrifice for the kingdom of Heaven's sake, and that, taking literally the words of their Master and of St. Paul, they had applied them in particular to the priesthood. The memory that an almost renaissance love of the beautiful had once entered into fierce conflict with this ideal disposed him to follow still more closely the principles of asceticism. To observe the primitive duty of fasting during the first decades of the nineteenth century, and that in an Oxford college, might have seemed a task likely to tax the highest ingenuity, but others besides Charles Dormer accomplished it. Like his friend Hurrell Froude,

though unknown to him, he devised methods of self-chastisement which would have seemed morbid and ludicrous not only to that generation but also to its descendants. Of their extent Keble knew a little and Tristram guessed. And now Dormer himself suspected —in fact he partly knew—that his own self-discipline was partly responsible for his state of health. Had he been right, or was it after all only some subtle form of pride or self-will that had set him on this path ? Perhaps he had been making an idol both of his warfare with himself and of his work, and this was why he was going to be taken away from both . . . At any rate it was clearly God's Will that he should be thus taken away, and therefore, however hard, it was the best for him. . . . Tristram, too, was coming with him, and he fell asleep, as the fire died down, wondering why it had been so easy to persuade him to this course.

When he came downstairs next morning, after breakfasting, by orders, in his room, Dormer discovered Tristram engaged with maps and guide-books, in the business-like mood of one who intends to get things settled up at once. They talked over plans for about an hour ; after which, since there was a gleam of sun, he was commanded to wrap up and come for a walk.

He laughed, and rallied Tristram on his despotism, but it was pleasant enough, and he obeyed it. There had been no snow the previous day ; it was yet to come. They walked between the bare hedgerows, still talking plans, discussing the rival attractions of Sicily and Corfu, settling how, when Dormer was well enough, they would take the opportunity of seeing Naples and Rome, and possibly Florence, and returning by sea, perhaps, from Leghorn, if they got as far north. Animation grew upon

both of them as they realised the delightful possibilities of their journey, and was not damped when a sudden storm of sleet, descending on them, drove them into an open shed by the side of the road, where, seated on the shafts of a hay-waggon, they continued for a while, scarcely conscious of the change of place.

At last, however, the subject suddenly ran dry, and Tristram, getting up, went to the doorway to see if the storm were over.

" I am afraid we must make up our minds to another quarter of an hour or so," he reported. " I do trust that you are not cold, Charles. Pull your cloak properly about you."

Dormer obeyed, and then, still sitting on the shaft, he launched a disturbing question.

" What did you mean last night, Tristram, when you said that there was no hurry for your ordination ? Is it that you are glad to get away because of all that has happened, or is there something else ? "

Tristram hesitated a second, then he took the plunge. " I *am* glad to get away, but there is something else."

" I thought so," said his friend quietly. " Do you mean to tell me about it ? "

" Of course," replied Tristram. " I should have told you last night, but I didn't want my affairs to keep you awake."

" Well, what is it ? I am awake now and am not going to bed for eight hours at least, so this is a good opportunity to tell me," observed Dormer, who was not troubled by incongruities of time or place.

" Charles, I cannot be ordained ! "

The effort to get out these words was apparent ; not so the effort which it cost Dormer to hide the shock they gave him. He merely asked coolly, " Why not ? "

"Because I'm thinking day and night of another man's wife. Charles, Charles, it's unbearable! I see her always as she was on her wedding-day, and . . . I see him standing beside her, too. I picture them in their own house. The Rector reads little things from her letters. He does not say much, out of consideration for me perhaps—only I know that she is happy so far —thank God!—very happy."

Dormer looked at him compassionately as he sat, his head in his hands, on a log near the door. "My poor Tristram!" he said gently. "I know. I quite understand." And then he was silent.

After a little he went on again. "All the same I hardly see how you could expect it to be otherwise. Of course you see her. If one image has been in a person's mind for many years, how can it be suddenly expelled at a certain hour, on a certain day? God does not ask from us impossibilities."

"But I want her," said Tristram from between his hands, "more than I have ever wanted her in my life . . . and sometimes I think I could kill him!"

It appeared to Dormer that these statements might or might not be serious. For the present he ignored them, and only said, "I'm thankful you are coming away with me. You need to give yourself a rest." And then, because, for Tristram's sake, he himself wanted time to think, he got up and went to the door. "The storm is nearly over, isn't it?"

It was not, but since the carrier's cart was at that moment descried coming along the road, and since Tristram thought that Dormer looked cold, he felt obliged to take the opportunity of getting him home without further delay. After all, his own affairs could wait a little longer.

(4)

But Tristram's need was too pressing to let them wait for very long ; and this time he made the opening himself. It was after dinner, and they were in the library again, and Dormer was not looking nearly as tired as the night before. So he said, almost directly they had sat down :

" Tell me what you think I should do, Charles. Surely you see that I can't be ordained?"

And Dormer, who had spent the afternoon in preparation for this question, said, gazing at the fire, "My advice is that you should be patient with yourself. You see you have been through a long strain. You have acted, God knows. Anyone would say that you had given her up absolutely, and you have certainly been a friend to both of them, to him as well as to her. Give yourself time, and your feelings will follow."

" Oh, yes, I've acted," said Tristram. " But what is that but a case of necessity after all ? All these years I have watched her and tried ineffectually to do whatever small things I could for her, so that it was impossible to fail her in a big thing."

" Impossible for you, perhaps, but then you are one of the most unselfish people I have ever met."

" If you think I'm unselfish," returned Tristram rather bitterly, " how do you explain that at this moment I hate Armand just because I know Horatia to be blissfully happy with him ? If she were unhappy I should hate him still more, but that does not affect my present feeling."

" My dear Tristram, don't put yourself to the trouble of telling me that sort of thing ! Of course it is wrong, utterly wrong, but if your will is constant, if you hate

and repudiate such thoughts, they only amount to a suggestion of the Evil One."

"I wish I could believe you."

"I am sure," said Dormer, "that in time you will come to hold the same view. And meanwhile I should just put away the idea of ordination. You were going to wait till Lent anyhow if necessary, and you can wait till June."

Tristram looked straight at him to see if he could read anything more in his expression.

"I don't know that I can trust you, so to speak," he said slowly. "I think you are too kind—to other people."

Dormer raised his eyebrows with a little smile. "Am I?"

"I know that I did what I could," went on Tristram in a sort of outburst, "and it hurt all the time like a knife. But now I feel swamped with a sense of failure, and I pray and go on praying, but there is no comfort anywhere. Sometimes I begin to wonder if, apart from my own feelings, I did right in helping on the marriage at all." And he laughed, because he was conscious of his own habit of introspection, and half ashamed to lay it bare.

At that Dormer sat up a little in his chair, and turned a very penetrating gaze upon him. "Now what do you mean exactly by that? I thought you felt quite sure from the beginning?"

"So I did," responded his friend, "and so I do, but —it's no use. I cannot really trust Armand. I know nothing against him, but I have a very shrewd suspicion that he only thinks of himself, and that he will always put his own interests before Horatia's. And for all Horatia's apparent independence she needs protection far more than many of her sex."

"Well?"

"You see I know Horatia," pursued Tristram, "and I realised that if she were once awakened, and then her hopes were frustrated, it might be a very serious thing for her; and there was always the chance that Armand might turn out better than I expected. Of course I put all that to the Rector, and, as you know, by degrees he came round."

"I quite understand. It would have been hard enough to resign her to a man whom you knew and trusted, especially as it practically devolved on you to plead your rival's cause, but it would have been easy compared with this."

"Yes, that's just it. It fairly breaks me to feel that I have given her up, perhaps, only to sorrow and neglect."

"You can't tell about that, Tristram," said Dormer very gravely. "When you resigned her, you gave her absolutely into the hands of God, and that means you gave her as you would give yourself, for joy or for sorrow. It has always seemed to me that it is quite possible for vicarious resignation to the Divine Will to be a higher thing than the resignation of oneself; certainly it can be a harder. . . . And, besides," he went on after a moment's pause, "I have something more to say. I have a favourite theory of my own. That rather hackneyed phrase of two people being made for one another is capable of another interpretation. It may mean that from all eternity Providence has intended two souls to meet to play upon each other, and that it is only through the discipline of married life that they can become what God intended them to become. I should never think of any two people as necessarily destined to happiness, but as destined by their union to work out

God's Will. After all, what have any of us to do with happiness ? "

There was a long silence. Tristram lay back in his chair, and Dormer looked as if he were thinking that the two souls in question would perhaps be the better for any kind of discipline. But at last he said :

" To go back to what you said this morning, that you wanted her more than you have ever wanted her in your life—"

" Yes ? "

" The more I think of it the more I believe you to be experiencing the inevitable struggle *after* the sacrifice has been made. Even our Lord knew what that was."

" What do you mean ? "

" Nothing was wanting to the completeness of the sacrifice when He offered the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday, and yet—afterwards—came the Agony in the Garden."

(5)

That night again his bedroom fire was the companion of Dormer's vigil. He sat long before it, thinking of all that Tristram had told him. He had always had a high ideal for his friend, but now he had even a higher, for he could not help the conviction that God was dealing specially with him, and that disappointment meant that He had some particular work for him to do. But he saw that Tristram had still a hard fight before him, for though he was, perhaps, tormenting himself unnecessarily about his feelings, yet if he was to become what Dormer believed, more and more, that God meant him to be, his loss must be turned from mere endurance into the pain-

ful joy of sacrifice. He guessed that it was possible for a soul fully to submit, and yet to fret, and that such an one would for the time lie beyond the reach of consolation.

Charles Dormer could never so much as think of consolation without the memory of Mrs. Hungerford coming back to him. Yes, if anyone could have comforted Tristram it would have been his own mother. This was her room; Dormer had it always when he stayed here, and it seemed full of her. Downstairs in the dining-room—he had glanced at it several times to-day over Tristram's head—was a picture, representing her as standing and looking down at her husband, seated at a table that bore a map of the West Indies outspread upon its crimson cloth. Curtains of a darker crimson, looped back to columns, and a vista of mixed landscape completed the ill-painted composition, which was only made beautiful by Mrs. Hungerford's expression. But, looking at that, Dormer knew why, as boy and young man, he had told her so many things.

It was impossible to think of her as anything else but a mother, and yet she had not married till she was nearly forty, and she had only had one child. To him she had always seemed the ideal of motherhood. That he should think so was no disloyalty to his own mother, to whose memory he still gave the almost awed worship of his childish days, for he saw now how that mother, despite her early marriage and her five sons, had never had just this gift which would always have been Mrs. Hungerford's, married or single. He knew that Mrs. Hungerford had understood what his own mother had been to him, as she understood everything else. Perhaps, indeed, she understood about Tristram now. . . .

CHAPTER V

(I)

THE pillaging of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, the fact that it now bore the legend "Mairie of the Fourth Arrondissement" upon its doors had, of course, no direct effect on Horatia—beyond teaching her of what the Paris mob was capable, and how exiguous were the titles to respect of the Laffitte ministry, already on its deathbed. Her places of worship lay elsewhere—the Embassy chapel in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, or that of the Reverend Lewis Way in the Avenue de Neuilly. For the Hon. and Rev. Stephen Grenville, if he wished to keep his daughter faithful to the Church of her baptism, had done a very shrewd thing when he extracted from her a promise to attend Morning Prayer every Sunday, when possible, and, if not, to read it herself. Horatia kept her promise faithfully. However bright the day, however alluring the prospect of going out with Armand, she resisted the temptation, and set forth, rather scandalised at the crowd of pleasure-seekers in the Tuileries gardens or elsewhere.

On the whole the service was pleasant to her, chiefly because it was a link with all things English, and in particular with her home. However commonplace and familiar "Dearly beloved brethren" might sound in English surroundings, Horatia found that it had power greatly to stir her heart in a foreign land. It gave her, too, a sort of happy sadness to displace the Evangelical

minister by her father, and his chapel (which had been a café) by Compton church.

Armand could not accompany Horatia to church, nor could she go with him—if he ever went there. This separation she had, of course, anticipated from the first, and it did not seem really to be of great importance. It mattered more to her that he did not care so much about the things of the past as she did—a discovery which she was gradually making, and which appeared to her all the more disconcerting because he, by his ancestors, belonged to that past in a way that she never could. But it interested him infinitely less, convinced and even fanatical Legitimist that he was.

She saw the thing clearly at last on the day that he drove her to Versailles in his smart phaeton lined with blue flower-dotted piqué, wherein, however, as a "fashionable" should, he sat upon so high a seat that it was extremely difficult to talk to him. Besides, there was the ridiculous little tiger behind, in his overcoat to the ankles, his gaiters and his shiny hat, who could, Horatia imagined, hear everything that they said. But she enjoyed the drive exceedingly, and looked forward with keen pleasure to seeing the palace. Yet, when they got there, Armand displayed small concern as to which part of the great pile had stood in the days of Louis the Just, and which had been built by the Grand Monarque, or on what balcony the King and Queen had showed themselves to the mob on that wild day in October, 1789. She could not but be disappointed, for she regarded her husband, quite justly, as the scion of a long line of devoted royalists, and she remembered how he had spoken, in England, of the Lilies. To her the deserted palace, abandoned for want of means to keep it up and shortly, it was said, to be converted into a

museum, was heart-rending in its associations of fallen glory. And Armand's ancestors had been among the very people who had moved, gay and gallant, upon its wide terraces ; in no point would he have disgraced the cohort himself. But it was evident that the empty basins of the royal fountains, the forlorn bosquets, roused in him no pleasurable melancholy, and that the Allée d'Apollon was merely a place where he could tell her, undisturbed, how charming she looked, and laugh at her sad face. In the end he took her away before she had seen all she desired, lest the drive back should not be accomplished without rain, " and your pretty dress be spoiled."

(2)

Horatia had reason to remember that day at Versailles, because of what occurred on the following morning.

She was paying her accustomed visit to her grandmother-in-law. The Duchesse was sitting propped up in bed, looking unusually grim, and not by any means beautified by the wrap in which she was enveloped.

" My dear," said the old lady, after some desultory conversation, " I have something to say to you which you probably will not like. You really must not see so much of Armand."

" Not . . . not see so much of Armand ! " gasped Horatia, stupefied. " Not see so much of my husband !"

" No," replied Madame de la Roche-Guyon emphatically, and the flaps on her lace cap waggled. " You are always about with him, and it is not convenable. I hear that you spent the whole day together at Versailles yesterday."

"But, Madame," ejaculated Horatia, scarcely believing her ears, "I don't under——what can you possibly mean? If *I* cannot spend the day with Armand——"

"Now listen, ma fille," said the Duchesse, not unkindly. "I do not know how it may be with the bourgeoisie, but in our world it is not the thing for a husband to be always dancing attendance on his wife. A man who does so, after the first few weeks of marriage, is looked on as a nincompoop, or a bore. He is, in fact, despised. And no one wants to receive husband and wife together at their salons; it is gênant, it destroys all wit and freedom of intercourse. Armand will naturally attach himself to some salon, and you must not expect him to accompany you to those which you frequent—nor, above all, to be constantly seen about with you in public places. It is not the part of a galant homme. And you have, for the present, the chaperon we have provided for you, Eulalie de Beaulieu."

A red spot came into Horatia's cheek. "But I do not like Madame de Beaulieu. I do not wish to go about with her."

Even the snort which the Dowager permitted herself did not destroy the air of cold dignity with which she replied. "You seem to forget the class of society into which you have married. It would be unheard of for a bride to be seen about alone. When her husband does not accompany her—and, as I say, the time for that is already long past—she must be under the escort of her mother or her mother-in-law. You have neither. Did my years and health permit I would myself fulfil the duty, but if you do not wish to have my death at your door you will accept the chaperonage of the Marquise de Beaulieu. When you have been married a year—above all when you have had a child—you will be

perfectly free to go where you will, to receive whom you will——"

"Even my own husband!" flashed Horatia.

For a second or two the Duchesse seemed staggered by the interruption and its bitterness; then, for she rather liked spirit, a slow smile revealed the absence of her false teeth.

"Let me tell you, my child," she riposted, "that if you do not take my advice you will end by making Armand ridiculous. Perhaps—having known him only so short a time—you have not yet discovered that there is nothing in the world that he hates so much. I counsel you to remember this."

The victory—or at all events the last stroke in battle—undoubtedly remained with Madame de la Roche-Guyon.

(3)

"'The Tenth Muse'?" asked Horatia. "Who is she?"

The opulent but sentimental-looking lady in purple who sat next her in Madame de Chastenay's drawing-room lifted up her hands. "Is it conceivable that you have never heard of Mademoiselle Delphine Gay?" she exclaimed. "But I forgot that you were English. Mademoiselle Gay is the literary prodigy of our sex; figure to yourself a young girl already celebrated at eighteen for her verse, pensioned by His Majesty, and crowned at twenty-three in the Capitol, by the Academy of the Tiber!"

"And she is going to read us some of her poems now?"

"To recite them. She has a divine voice and manner."

Horatia looked round the room wherein, on this March evening, were seated many ladies and a few men, awaiting the intellectual treat in the midst of a light reflected with dazzling effect from the chandeliers, lustres and chimney-ornaments of cut steel, with which the apartment had lately been beautified. A little way off Armand was bending over the chair of a lady whom she did not know; he was evidently laughing. More than a week had passed since Horatia's passage of arms with the Duchesse. For two days she had refused to go and see her, then, through the agency of old Mademoiselle de la Roche-Guyon—a trembling mediator—a truce was patched up between the combatants. But if the affair appeared to have passed from the Dowager's mind it had not so quitted Horatia's. She did not say a word about it to Armand. Once or twice she was tempted to think the whole thing nonsense, the creation of a malicious brain, and certainly this evening it tended so to appear to her, for here was her husband with her at this salon, and a literary salon too. It was the first of this class that Horatia had attended, and devoutly did she hope that it might be the entry, at last, into that heaven where Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Chateaubriand, Alfred de Vigny, and so many constellations swam in glory.

She was recalled from her musings by a stir. Two ladies entered the room—the elder with an indescribable brio. Madame Gay had been a celebrity of the Empire, and kept about her an extraordinary aroma of those great days, a suggestion of staff-officers, mamelukes, the flash of sabres in the sun and the dust cloud over wheeling squadrons, seeming indeed as if she might at any moment break into "Partant pour la Syrie" or some hymn to Glory and Victory. Mademoiselle Delphine

gained by the contrast with her parent. Tall, well-built, with a fine head beautifully set on an equally fine neck, clad in a simple white semi-classical dress wearing no ornaments, and with her abundant fair hair hanging in ringlets, she had something of the air of a sibyl. She looked about twenty-five, but was in reality a little older.

Madame Gay settled herself, and the Tenth Muse was led to a chair apart—an honourable chair, whose horse-hair seat was painted with roses and camellias. She composed herself in a suitable attitude, brought her beautiful bare arms to one side, clasped her hands loosely together, and, looking up at the ceiling, began to recite in a grave, deep, almost languorous voice, her poem on the last days of Pompeii, commemorating the fate of Théora the priestess of Apollo, and the young warrior Paulus, and recounting how, two thousand years after,

" On trouva dans l'enceinte où le temple s'élève
Sur l'autel une lyre . . . et près du seuil un glaive."

" Is it not touching ! " said the purple lady to Horatia. The green plumes in her headdress quivered, and she dabbed her eyes rather ostentatiously. " Ces pauvres gens. . . . Ah, she is beginning again ! "

This time it was a Hymn to Ste Généviève.

" Patronne de France, amour de nos aieux . . ."

At the conclusion of this poem, amid the hum of applause, Madame Gay was observed to approach her offspring, and to whisper something into her ear. The poetess shook her head ; then, seeming to relent, and smiling, she announced

" Le bonheur d'être belle. Dedicated to Madame Récamier."

" Quel bonheur d'être belle, alors qu'on est aimée !
Autrefois de mes yeux je n'étais pas charmée ;
Je les croyais sans feu, sans douceur, sans regard ;
Je me trouvais jolie un moment par hasard.
Maintenant ma beauté me parait admirable.
Je m'aime de lui plaire, et je me crois aimable. . . .
Il le dit si souvent ! Je l'aime, et quand je vois
Ses yeux avec plaisir se reposer sur moi,
Au sentiment d'orgueil je ne suis point rebelle,
Je bénis mes parents de m'avoir fait si belle.
Mais . . . pourquoi dans mon cœur ces subites alarmes ?—
Si notre amour tous deux nous trompait sur mes charmes :
Si j'étais laide enfin ? Non . . . il s'y connait mieux !
D'ailleurs pour m'admirer je ne veux que ses yeux !—
Bientôt il va venir ! bientôt il va me voir !
Comme, en me regardant, il sera beau ce soir !
Le voilà ! je l'entends, c'est sa voix amoureuse !
Quel bonheur d'être belle ! Oh, que je suis heureuse ! "

The extraordinary appropriateness of these verses to Horatia's own attitude of mind during the past months made her forget to join in the applause which followed their recitation. Yes, it had been exactly her own case ; she knew it, and Armand knew it too. He would tease her about them going home. She looked round, with a little half-shy smile, for her husband, but he was nowhere to be seen, and she remembered that since Mademoiselle Gay's entrance she had been too much occupied to notice his whereabouts.

And then came his voice in her ear, sudden and by no means " amoureuse."

"For God's sake let us go!"

Horatia turned round, startled. "Certainly, if you wish it," she responded, and, the recitation having apparently come to an end, she was able to take her leave almost at once. Her first thought had been that Armand was ill.

"You were bored, I am afraid?" she hazarded, as the carriage started.

"Mon Dieu!" answered her husband, throwing himself back in the corner, "could one be otherwise? It was intolerable—to listen to all that stuff about Pompeii and Ste. Génévière. Madame de Chastenay is preposterous with her female phenomena. Don't ever ask me to go there again!"

And, had it not been Armand who spoke, Horatia would have thought the voice thoroughly bad-tempered.

"But, my dear Armand," she protested, putting a hand on his arm, "I would willingly have come away sooner if I had known. I thought you were admiring the poetess; she is very pretty—no, she is beautiful."

"Entendu. It is a woman's business to be beautiful, but not to declaim wearisome verses. Don't ask me to go to any more of these functions with you!"

Horatia turned a little pale and drew back. Could it be true after all, that incredible thing which the Duchesse had said, that she would make him ridiculous—that he himself thought it, feared it?

Armand could not but perceive her shrink, and the lover conquered the sulky male. He caught her hand.

"My darling, forgive me! I didn't mean to hurt you. You know that there is no greater pleasure for me than to be with you, but . . . I *was* so bored!"

Impossible to resist the half-humorous, half-pleading tone, and the look in his eyes. As the carriage rolled

under their own gateway she bent forward and put a light kiss on his temple.

" I forgive you," she said.

" Mademoiselle Gay did not then give you the canto of her poem on the Magdalene where the devil, to tempt the saint, takes on the form of Joseph of Arimathea ? " inquired the Duchesse that evening. " That must, ma foi, be very striking, and I regret that I have never even read it."

CHAPTER VI

(1)

" O temps, suspends ton vol, et vous, heures propices,
Suspendez votre cours !
Laissez-nous savourer les rapides délices
Des plus beaux de nos jours ! "

—sang M. Alphonse de Lamartine to the Comtesse Armand de la Roche-Guyon from the beautifully bound copy of *Les Meditations* which, with his just-published *Harmonies,* Horatia had found in her room. A line from Emmanuel had asked her to please him by accepting them. And, having turned over the new poems, she had reverted to that earlier and famous elegy over past happiness, *Le Lac,* and its passion and melancholy had sent her into a half reverie.

How kind, how thoughtful, Emmanuel was ! This gift could be but the outcome of his knowledge of her desire for personal acquaintance with the poet. He could not give her that, and Armand would not.

" My dear child," the latter had said, " it is quite out of the question. If you want to see M. Victor Hugo, Dumas, de Vigny, and this young de Musset, you must go to the sort of club they have at Charles Nodier's, the Cénacle I think they call it—and, of course, you cannot do that. Comte Alfred de Vigny does belong to our world, it is true, but he hardly goes anywhere. But as for these Gautiers and Balzacs, where do you expect

to find them ? In some dingy lodgings in the Quarter, not anywhere that you are likely to visit ! "

" But a great many ladies of your world, as you call them, have literary salons, surely," pleaded Horatia.

" Like the one the other day ? No, not many are left now, and what there are are mostly Orleanist."

" What about Madame Récamier ? " suggested Horatia. " Would not the presence of Monsieur de Chateaubriand be a guarantee of right principles ? "

Armand laughed. " I cannot deny that. Now that there is no monarch the great René is more of a monarchist than ever. Very well, little tease, I will get you the entrée to the Abbaye-aux-Bois as soon as I can."

And with that promise—as yet unfulfilled, Horatia was forced to be content. . . .

Her eyes went back to her book.

" O temps, suspends ton vol——"

But the thoughts came bubbling up, displacing the flow of the verses. She did not want the flight of time suspended this afternoon ; rather the contrary. Armand was away, and would not be back till to-morrow ; the flight of time was a mere crawl.

" Laissez-nous savourer les rapides délices . . ."

But this was no fleet delight, to sit here in her boudoir, full of flowers though it was, with nothing to do, and the rain falling outside. Besides, if she went out, it must be with the Marquise.

The last time they had driven out together, Madame de Beaulieu had taken her to see the villa outside Paris which she was furnishing for a summer retreat—the latest craze. This was no ancestral château, and everything in it must be new, and, said the Marquise, marked by extreme simplicity of taste. And in the drawing-

room, where the blinds were painted to resemble stained-glass windows, where the chairs, stools and sofas were of bamboo and Persian-figured chintz, the ottomans and floorcloths of split reeds, Madame de Beaulieu described the style of dress which she had designed for herself when inhabiting this seclusion—a plain white jacconet gown, with an apron of dove-coloured gros de Naples, worked round with green foliage, the pockets cut en cœur, the hair to be done smoothly with but one high bow and a comb, and no ornaments whatsoever.

It was after this expedition that Horatia had suddenly taken the resolution of unpacking her books. She felt haunted by the dove-coloured apron with green foliage and heart-shaped pockets, and with Martha's assistance she brought the prisoners once more to the light of day. Some had been among her childhood's treasures—*Robinson Crusoe*, *Don Quixote*, a few sheets of the *Arabian Nights*, *The Scottish Chiefs*, *Susan Gray*—and then there were all the favourites of later years. She welcomed them with an almost guilty pleasure, and there they were now, most of them in a bookcase under the window looking out into the Rue Saint-Dominique, for under the other, which gave on to the courtyard of the Hôtel, stood the Duchesse's New Year's gift to her—a satinwood table inlaid with ebony, encumbered on every side with drawers from which hung workbags of blue satin, stocked with the requirements for a hundred and one useless handicrafts—with velvet to make flowers, and gauze for painting upon. Horatia had just opened these pouched drawers, no more, and at present used the table rather ruthlessly for a sort of jardinière, so that the inlay was slowly deteriorating under pots of camellias and baskets of violets in moss.

She took up the other volume of Lamartine. Between the pages she had put an old letter of her father's to mark the place, and idly she unfolded this and read it again. The Rector spoke of many things; among others of Tristram's tour in Italy with his friend; they were reported to be enjoying themselves and Mr. Dormer's health was improving slowly. A passage she had forgotten struck her again.

"By the way, I have been having a correspondence with the Duke of Devonshire, who is a very keen numismatist, about some coins of mine; in the course of it he mentioned that he supposed you and Lady Granville (who is, as you know, his sister) had made acquaintance with each other. Thinking this over, I came to the conclusion that, from what you tell me of the political views of your new relations, it is improbable that you have been presented at the Embassy, but I cannot see any reason why you should not call upon her privately if she has no objection, since you are, after all, English by birth. I met her many years ago at Devonshire House with Tom Grenville; I think she would remember me. The Duke said he was going to write to Lady Granville about you; I do not know if he has done so; perhaps you have heard from her."

Horatia had not. The letter passed on to the projected Reform Bill which, Mr. Grenville wrote, was occupying everybody to the exclusion of anything else, and he heard that after dinner even ladies fell to at Potwallopers, Outvoters and Rotten Boroughs! "Now it has once been broached," went on the writer, "the rumpus if it is not carried will be appalling, in fact I think immediate combustion will be the result. It seems to me impossible now that the people could ever sit down quietly without Reform, or that they should be

content with less than they have been promised ; but the longer it is delayed the more exasperated they will get. Your cousin Chandos is much exercised about it."

Horatia looked at the date ; it was the 9th of March. As she knew, since those words were written, the first reading of the Bill had been carried by a majority of one. But how little these great events seemed to touch her here.

The letter concluded, "I hope, my darling, that you are still very happy. If you are, so is your old Papa."

The letter fell on to *Les Harmonies*. Was she "still very happy?" . . . . How could she ask herself the question ! Of course she was, blissfully happy—provided Armand were with her. But, of course, as she often told herself—and thought how sensible she was for being able to do so—he could not always be with her. Quite apart from the Dowager's odious recommendations she was determined not to be a drag upon him. The time had come when she must try to fill in her own life. That had been one motive for the unpacking of her books. She attended, of her own volition, one or two salons—that of the Marquise de Montglas, who always received lying in a chaise longue, draped with shawls, for she was a permanent invalid, though she held firmly the threads of conversation in the circle which spread fanwise round her couch—and that of her sister, Madame de Juvelcourt. The latter was deformed, a fact of which Horatia had been warned ; but she was hardly prepared to find, as she did, a really hideous little dwarf, black and vivacious, literally perched on cushions, dressed in the latest fashion, making no attempt to hide her disadvantages, and not, indeed, seeming to mind them in the least. She had received

the English wife very kindly, and as she was one of the Duchesse's rare visitors, Horatia felt more at home at her receptions than at any others. She even managed to enjoy herself there, and excited perhaps by Madame de Juvelcourt's own gaiety and wit, to return full of spirits, but when she got in her first inquiry was always for Armand. She was restless, feverishly restless, despite her resolve, when she was not with him. And he had naturally his own avocations, the usual diversions of a young man of fashion. She did not expect to share these, she did not even question him about them, but as the weeks went on, she could not but be aware that they seemed to claim him much more than they had done. He was always charming to her, and yet—and yet, she was conscious of something slipping. What was it, this tiny foreboding at her heart, an asp in Eden ? She could not tell. Was it possible that there could be such a thing as over-sweetness, and had he begun to feel it, was she herself beginning to feel it ? . . .

Horatia came back to her present surroundings. Of course she did not really think these things—they were treachery to her great love. But one thought she did not drive away, a thought that was daily becoming more pursuing, the realisation of how much she was in bondage in her own house—if indeed it could be called her own. Marriage had not given her liberty ; she had been far freer in Berkshire—free to come and go, to walk or ride—free to do, within reasonable limits, exactly as seemed good to her. Here she was more or less in the position of a child in the nursery. And when, as now, reflection on this topic ended by making her angry, she would try to stifle her impatience with some occupation, or to forget in Armand's society the price she was paying for it. With an exclamation

she sprang up from her chair, and went to the window to see if it were still raining.

Nothing was doing in the courtyard—nothing was ever doing there. The little trees stood orderly in their tubs. A childish desire seized Horatia to throw something down . . . Someone went out; it was Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon, summoned, probably to the Duchesse, who had an attack of indigestion and devotion. She wished he had been to see her. She liked him, and he interested her; she thought that he was probably of that particular type of French piety represented by Fénélon. But she knew very little about him, and after all he had made no attempt to convert her.

Certainly the rain was stopping, for the major-domo was now observed by the watcher to go forth, armed with an enormous bunchy umbrella, which, however he did not unfurl. Even he could go out, if not when he liked, at least without being accompanied against his will! She would rather stay in than go driving with the Marquise.

But then the sun suddenly began to shine, and Horatia could withstand no longer. She rang for her maid, ordered the carriage, changed her dress, and drove round to Madame de Beaulieu's house in the Rue de l'Université—a five minutes' drive.

And there an unexpected tidings greeted her ravished ears. "Madame la Marquise is indisposed; she prays Madame la Comtesse to excuse her; she cannot go out to-day."

"And I am expected to go home again like a good child," thought Madame la Comtesse. "Never! Very well," she said to the footman, "tell Jean to drive me to Herbault's."

The dome of the Invalides glittered again in the sun, but as she crossed the river the giant statues on the Pont de la Concorde looked threateningly at her. She drove across the great expanse of the Place with the feeling of a child let out of school. The Rue Neuve St. Augustin came all too soon. She had no intention of going into Herbault's, and had only mentioned the famous shop because it would necessitate crossing the Seine. When the carriage was drawing up she leant forward and said that she had changed her mind, and would go to Houbigant's in the Rue St. Honoré instead.

At Houbigant's she went in and bought some essence de mousseline, imagining that the other ladies making purchases looked at her curiously. As the assistant was tying up the bottle of scent she racked her brains to think what she could do next. Though her drives in the Bois de Boulogne had not enchanted her, she would have gone thither, since it would have been quiet, had she not known that Jean would immediately say that it was too far for the horses—an opinion which he shared or affected to share with other ancient coachmen of the Faubourg.

Suddenly her father's old letter flashed into her mind. Was not the English Embassy quite near, practically in the same street ? and had not the Duke of Devonshire said that he would write ? This was certainly her chance ; she might never have such another. She could but be refused entrance if the Ambassadress did did not wish to see her. In a few moments she found herself in front of the house which had been Princess Borghese's.

The man admitted her and took her card, and returning said that Madame l'Ambassadrice was in the serre and would receive her. He proceeded to conduct

her thither, and passing through a white and gold drawing-room she came to a long gallery of a conservatory, filled with spring flowers, where, on a divan in a little grove of orange-trees and lilacs and double red camellias, a lady of about forty, wrapped in a shawl, was taking farewell of a youth of French appearance, who was, however, talking very good English to her. The young Frenchman passed Horatia, tall, very young, good-looking. She was announced, and found herself being warmly greeted.

"And this is Stephen Grenville's daughter! My brother has just written to me about you. My dear, I would like to kiss you, but I have a horrible cold. Come and sit on the divan by me if you are not afraid of catching it. I have gargled and blistered till I am sure there can be no infection left!"

So Horatia sat down by the side of this daughter of the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, who had not indeed inherited her mother's looks, but who had to the full the Cavendish charm of voice and manner, and, as she soon discovered, inexhaustible supplies both of humour and of wit. Lady Granville assumed, rather to her visitor's dismay, that her new relatives had "allowed" her to come, whereat Horatia, feeling something like a truant schoolgirl, had to confess that such was not the case. The Ambassadress looked grave, and Horatia was still more uncomfortable when it transpired that Lady Granville had, for her sake, relaxed her rule about formal presentations to herself. However, nobody could have been more kind or amusing. Horatia being English born, Lady Granville was able to permit herself some remarks on French society not untinged with malice, asking her visitor if she had yet become acquainted with "the type of woman made by

Herbault, Victorine and Alexandre, the woman who looks to see if you have six curls or five on the side of your head," and whether it had yet been patronisingly said of her that no one would take her for an Englishwoman—" just as I sometimes tell Charles de Montalembert—that young man who was leaving as you came in—that he will some day be taken for an Englishman. But then he *is* half English, or rather Scotch. Yet no true Englishman would ever permit himself to be so enthusiastic about the Church."

" The Church ! " exclaimed Horatia. " That young man ! Oh, Lady Granville, how . . . how unusual ! Is he going to be a priest ? "

" Oh no, my dear. He will be a peer of France when his father dies. He is an angel, rather too good for this earth of ours, but enthusiastic to the last degree! You have heard, I dare say, of Lamennais, the great preacher ? Well, he and some friends started last autumn a most violent clerical paper, called *L'Avenir*, to which M. de Montalembert is one of the chief contributors. They want an alliance between Catholics and the people, they have alienated the Legitimists, hitherto the main supporters of the Church, by saying they sacrificed their God to their King, and now they are pressing the Bishops and clergy to give up all their endowments and palaces, without thinking how the poor things are to live. And the latest is that Charles and his great friend, a young abbé named Lacordaire, are talking of opening a 'free school' next month, and teaching in it themselves."

" And all this excitement is about the Church ? " said Horatia musingly. " How strange, because in England too—at least at Oxford . . ."

" My dear, *surely* there are no Charles de Montal-

emberts at Oxford—of all places! Besides, why should there be?"

Horatia could not say, but the question had so vividly called up another Charles—and his friend—that for a moment she hardly heard Lady Granville discussing the prospects of the Reform Bill.

When she took her leave, pressed by the Ambassadress to come soon on one of her Mondays—her Fridays were so crowded—she drove home in the highest spirits, feeling that she had really made a friend, and a most delightful friend.

CHAPTER VII

HORATIA drove with the Marquise next afternoon. The Champs Elysées were very gay, and her spirits always went up when the sun shone. There was the indefinable romance of spring, the eternal romance of Paris—and Armand was coming back to-night. She was inclined to wonder at her restlessness of yesterday.

"Dear me," observed Madame de Beaulieu suddenly, "I smell essence de mousseline. When have you been to Houbigant's?" And without waiting for an answer she went on, "You are improving, ma chère. As a rule you English have organs for which no odour is too strong, and no colour is too striking. Lavender is the basis of all your perfumes, and the rainbow of all your colours."

As she spoke a very pretty woman, elaborately dressed in violet drap d'Algers and swansdown, and extravagantly painted, passed them for the third or fourth time in her carriage. She was alone, and was driving very slowly; many glances, of which she seemed pleasurably conscious, were cast at her from other carriages and by the male loungers under the trees. Chiefly to avoid the subject of Houbigant's, Horatia asked who she was.

The Marquise put up her lorgnettes. "That?" she said carelessly—"oh, Mademoiselle Blanchette Delmar of the Opera of course. Yes, she is pretty, isn't she? Armand thought so once, too, but they

apparently got tired of each other very soon. I forget who is the favoured swain at present."

A curious sick coldness came over Horatia ; yet the red mounted to her cheeks. The Marquise observed it.

"Ma chère," she said with a laugh, "surely you have not been placing your husband on a pinnacle apart from other men ! Armand as an anchorite ! Mon Dieu ! "

"No, of course not," said Horatia, battling for composure, "but . . ."

"But ! " repeated Madame de Beaulieu, "But what ? The young person is very well, in her way. And it is quite a year ago. Then you are shocked at me for knowing about it ? Well, I grant you that we are not supposed to know these things, for it is not good taste for a gentleman to parade his love-affairs. But pardon, for perhaps in England (though I had not guessed it such an Eden of purity) these things do not exist, and I have soiled your innocence unnecessarily. Forgive me ! "

All the distaste of Horatia's soul for the Marquise blossomed at this moment into a sudden flower of hatred. She wanted to stop the carriage and get out. What need to have told her ! Her brain went on working furiously as they continued to drive up and down and the Marquise continued to talk. Horatia had heard a good many things since she came to Paris, but they had never seemed to touch her—she had never imagined that they could touch her. . . . It hurt ; it burned like poison. . . .

When she got back to the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon she was told, to her surprise, that M. le Comte had already returned, and that he was waiting for her in her boudoir.

She had not expected him till night, and she went up the stairs very slowly. Part of her was crying out for joy that he was back, would have liked to run to him, to throw her arms round his neck and say to him, "Darling, I don't think of it, now that you are here: it is past, it is untrue." And part of her did not feel thus.

If she had had any intention of referring to the subject she had not, in the event, much chance of doing so. It was to be a day of shocks. Armand was standing with his back to her, looking out of the window giving on to the courtyard; evidently he had been watching her arrival. He turned at her entrance, came forward and kissed her hand, her cheek, and then said gravely, "Horatia, I am sorry to have to scold you."

"What is it?" she asked, genuinely amazed.

"You went yesterday to the English Embassy."

"O, that!" she exclaimed, moved by the ludicrous disparity between this enormity and what she had been hearing of him. And she began to walk across the room, pulling off her gloves.

"And is 'that' so small a thing to you?" demanded Armand angrily. "You know that for nothing in the world would one of us be seen setting foot in a house which is on intimate terms with the Palais Royal, which receives the Orléans princes. Yet you choose a day when I am away, when my cousin cannot accompany you . . ."

Horatia turned round. "Please be careful what you are saying to me, Armand! I think you cannot realise that you are accusing me—me—of duplicity."

"Eh bien, what is it then?" asked her husband.

"Ignorance, stupidity, what you like, but not that," she said, "How was I to know of these . . . these

petty restrictions? I am English, and Lady Granville is English, and knew my father."

"Pardon me, you are French now," retorted Armand. "Permit me to remind you that you have duties towards the name which you honoured me by accepting."

His tone a little suggested that the honour was the other way round. The caged feeling came over her for a moment. "I am the prisoner of the tribe," she thought to herself. "Armand will never liberate me." She said coldly, "Lady Granville enlightened me. I am sorry, very sorry, if I have injured your prestige, but it was done in ignorance." With that she turned her back on him once more, and went and sat down by the window. Her husband followed her, biting his lip.

"I beg your pardon for supposing that you knew what you were doing," he said, still rather stiffly. "You see, Horatia, do you not—"

"I see a great many things," she said. "I see that I am to have no friends, no will, no identity of my own. I may not go out when I wish; I may not see you when I wish . . ."

Suddenly she heard her own voice; it sounded shrill. The ache, the disgust of the afternoon swung back on her. Was she driving him to that? She stopped; and, more electric than a lightning flash, it came to her how most triumphantly she could end this situation. So, rising, she laid her hand on his breast and, looking up at him, said very gently and deliberately,

"Are you really angry with me, Armand?"

Her victory was instantaneous.

(2)

Martha, pulling back her lamb's curtains next morning, was, all unsuspecting, like the gaoler who rouses the captive. As the daylight flooded the room Horatia woke more fully to the realisation of an extraordinary weight on her spirits. While she lay there waiting for her coffee the whole of yesterday's scene in the Champs Elysées played itself through again. That woman with her laughing, reddened lips. . . . There was time to taste shock, and yet she did not taste it fully ; the soreness at her heart had in it much more of the most primitive of all passions—jealousy.

Her coffee and rolls came ; she could scarcely touch them. She wanted Armand to enter ; but he had been out late last night at the bal de l'Opéra. He might not come for a long time. Tears began to well out under her lashes ; and presently Horatia de la Roche-Guyon, her head half buried in the pillow, was sobbing like a child that cries for it knows not what.

" Bonjour, chère amie ! "

She had not heard his knock, nor his entrance. Hastily and stealthily she dabbed at her eyes.

" You are late this morning," observed the Comte cheerfully. " Look at me, not home till three this morning, but already risen. . . . My darling, what is the matter ? "

Horatia, her face nearly concealed by the pillow and the tumbled masses of her hair, murmured something unintelligible.

Armand sat down on the bed. " My angel, what is it ? Is it because I scolded you yesterday ? But you forgave me. . . . Look at me Horatia, and tell me what is the matter." He had gently to draw

away the hand which held the handkerchief to her eyes. "Come, my darling—Bon Dieu, what hair you have!" He took up a lock.

"Madame de Beaulieu says it is hideous," sighed Horatia between two little sobs.

"That is because she cannot succeed in buying any like it, I expect," retorted her husband. "Is that why you were crying, my child? Listen then, and I will tell you a secret. The Duchesse is having a wig made as nearly as possible the colour of your hair; she is going to wear it on her fête or on the next saint's day. There's a compliment for you! Do not mind, therefore, what my cousin says. All women are jealous of one another. . . . Come now, take away that handkerchief and let me kiss you!"

She let him do so, and even clung to him. "Promise me, promise me, that you will always love me, Armand!"

"*The good old phrase again!*" whispered a little imp in the young man's ear. "Foolish, foolish child," he said, smiling his delightful smile. "What do you think I am made of then?"

"You do really forgive me for yesterday?" she murmured, hiding her tear-stained face in his breast. "It must never happen again. I could not bear that anything should come between us. . . . As long as you are with me, Armand, nothing can."

"My darling," he said, and kissed the top of her head.

"I am very, very sorry about Lady Granville," she went on after a moment, and with a heavy sigh. "Is the Duchesse exceedingly angry with me?"

"Perhaps the slaughter she made of me yesterday will content her," suggested her husband cheerfully.

Horatia clasped him closer. "O poor Armand!

I will never, never see Lady Granville again ! I will write to her to-day and say so."

When, a few minutes later, Armand had gone, after assuring her again that he would love her as long as the Seine ran through Paris, that she was probably the one woman in the world who could look beautiful after tears, and that he had found the bal de l'Opéra last night very dull because he could not hope to come on a lock of her hair peeping out from the hood of a domino, Horatia slipped out of bed and went to her mirror. Was she beautiful, pale and heavy-eyed as she was ? She propped her face on her hands, her hair falling about her shoulders in a cloud of sunset, and stared into the glass. As long as the Seine ran through Paris ! Would he love her just as much when her colour was not as clear and fresh as now it was, when there were lines on her white forehead, when her bright hair began to lose its lustre . . . when, in short, she was no longer young, and, as he called her now, beautiful ? Would he ?

And would he love her just as much . . . or more . . . if, if—

She was still gazing, with a dream in her half-smiling eyes, when Martha came to dress her.

CHAPTER VIII

CIRCUMSTANCES were beginning to prove, as usual, too strong for Armand de la Roche-Guyon. For all his self-will he was generally at the mercy of his surroundings; too light a bark to struggle with the stream, too buoyant to be wholly swamped by it. In England Horatia had been his circumstances; before her, Laurence de Vigerie; before her, not a few other ladies; and now Paris, his friends, his family had enveloped him again. For it was quite true, as the Duchesse had hinted, that his friends were beginning to tease him about his devotion to his wife, while on the other hand he suspected that his wife would soon come to consider him not devoted enough. This morning's little scene was all very well in its way, but a melancholy prescience whispered to him that the day might dawn when he would find it a bore to keep on assuring Horatia that he loved her. There was no excitement now in the situation, and she was so entirely a captive that he felt his own chains. A certain standard of behaviour was evidently going to be demanded of him, whereas what he craved for was not obligations but diversion. And that the two things he most held in horror, the possibilities of becoming ridiculous and of being made uncomfortable, should descend upon him at once, from different quarters, was rather damnable.

He was in this mood when he crossed the Pont

Royal that afternoon, turned to the left and began to walk beside the wall of the Tuileries garden. It was two o'clock, the fashionable hour for promenaders within, but Armand chose the comparative peace of the quay. The sun shone; a little breeze blew off the Seine, and he walked along frowning, no less handsome and attractive for his ill-temper, while two soubrettes, linked arm in arm, turned to look after him speculating on its cause.

Diversion, excitement, a stimulating uncertainty as to his reception—all these had been his at the hands of Madame de Vigerie. Armand had long admired this young, fashionable, and widowed lady, had paid her marked court, and had arrived last summer at the conclusion that, if she would have him—which was by no means certain—he could not do better than to marry her. Then had come his visit to England, and the intrusion of a sudden, genuine passion. But his intention had nevertheless held till the night of that ball in Berkshire. Afterwards he had lain awake till morning fighting the new emotion with the remembrance of the old, then, with a characteristic mixture of coolness and impetuosity, had decided that the new was better. Probably it was, yet he wished that he were at this moment on his way to the familiar drawing room in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, if only to have his present irritation put to flight.

So he walked, swinging his gold and tortoiseshell cane, and behind him, in an open carriage, a lady in lie-de-vin and ermine was overtaking him. With her furs she had a little parasol against the April sun; a boa was wound twice round her neck. She was not pretty, but she was supremely elegant. Leaning forward, she spoke to her coachman; the pace of her

horses was moderated, and thus, while still overtaking him, she was able to contemplate at her leisure the figure of the young man to which she drew near. And she did so with a smile on her lips, and her head a little on one side.

Abreast of Armand she called out softly,

"Monsieur de la Roche-Guyon!" and the carriage drew up.

Armand turned. It is always startling when the subject of one's meditations suddenly appears before one, and the slowness with which his hand went to his hat was sufficient proof of the degree to which he was amazed.

"You in Paris—you!" he exclaimed.

"With your permission," said the Vicomtesse, smiling. "Or even, Monsieur, without it."

Armand, hat in hand, stared at her.

"Where have you been all this while?" he asked at last.

"In Italy," replied she. "And you?"

"Further than that," returned the young man rather meaningly, coming nearer to the carriage. He had now regained his composure, and looked at her to see if she understood. "I have—but may I not come and tell you about it?"

"Mon Dieu, is it so tragic as all that?" asked Madame de Vigerie with gravity. "But, my poor friend, I know all about it. You are in the most serious of all scrapes. Yes, I know all about it. Nevertheless, come and see me some day," She rearranged her furs; the coachman looked round for orders.

"When?" asked the Comte eagerly. "At the usual time—three?"

Madame de Vigerie shook her head. "Oh no, not

now ! I am at home on Tuesdays at eight.—Yes, to the Champs Elysées."

She drove off. So she did not care the snap of a finger . . . unless she were dissembling very well. And she had relegated him to the hour of her salon, where, for the sake of a sight of her, he would have to endure all sorts of bores.

Nevertheless, she was back, and Armand was conscious of a distinct lightening of his spirits.

(2)

It was, no doubt, a dark and shameful blot on the family blazon that the heir of the house of La Roche-Guyon should be an amateur botanist of some distinction. Not the tragic life-in-death of his wife, nor the unmothered state of his only son was to be compared, in the eyes of the Dowager Duchess, with the fact that Emmanuel, Marquis de la Roche-Guyon was delivered over to a taste which she considered suitable enough in an apothecary but unspeakably derogatory for a man of family. The Marquis, however, never betrayed much discomposure at the sarcasms of his venerable grand-parent. Forty-one years of a not very happy life had taught him calm, and, kindly and unostentatiously courteous though he was to everyone, he went his own way. Despite his name and connections, he had done nothing in the world of politics or diplomacy, and never would ; he was merely an ineffective, reserved, tolerant and melancholy gentleman who desired to lead the life of a recluse and did not always succeed in doing it.

It was in accordance with his habits that when he took his walks abroad such exercises were likely

sooner or later to lead him past the bookstalls on the quays of the Seine—for he was something of a bibliophile too. On a certain afternoon in April therefore, about ten days after Armand's meeting with the Vicomtesse de Vigerie, he was passing slowly along by the lidded boxes on the Quai Voltaire, when he observed a fashionably dressed and elegant young man turning over the old books at a stall a little further on, and recognised, to his no small surprise, his own brother. Armand was humming a tune between his teeth, and seemed gay above the ordinary ; the lamentable old proprietor of the box watched him with respect.

" This is a new avocation for you, mon cher," observed the Marquis, tapping him on the shoulder.

" Just the person I wanted," retorted the young man, glancing up. " Find me that, and I will never call you herbalist or bookworm again." He put into the hand of his elder a slip of paper inscribed in a feminine writing. Emmanuel looked at it and gave it back.

" You are not in the least likely to find that here. It is rather rare."

" Dame ! so it seems. I have ruined a clean pair of gloves over the search already. I must go to a bookseller's, I suppose."

" Well, I was going to say that if you want it for yourself or for your wife I have a copy, and would lend it you with pleasure."

" A thousand thanks," replied Armand, turning away from the box. " But I want it for someone else, so that would not do. I must try down the Rue des Saints-Pères. Are you coming my way ? No ; au revoir then."

He crossed the road ; and the Marquis looked after his alert young back with a certain wistfulness before he continued his peregrination.

A little later Armand emerged from a second-hand bookshop in the Rue des Saints-Pères with the coveted volume under his arm. As he did so he saw himself presenting it to Madame de Vigerie. He had really taken a good deal of trouble for her, and probably, in his ignorance, paid twice as much as the book was worth. But that did not matter if Laurence was pleased. He had seen her now three times since their meeting on the Quai des Tuileries—never alone, it is true, nor had he succeeded in penetrating to her real attitude of mind towards him. He intended to make the book an excuse for calling at an hour different from that to which he had been restricted. Since it was not a matter of life and death to him he found it distinctly exciting not to know what she really felt about him. But that was part of Laurence's attraction. Meditating on the pleasant and even piquant prospect opening before him he reached the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon.

Horatia was sitting in the salon, wearing a gown in which he had once expressly admired her—though, as he had already forgotten this fact, the choice had no significance for him. A book lay open in her lap. But as her husband came over to her and kissed her hand, uttering one of the agreeable nothings that came so easily to him, he was instantly aware that she had been waiting for him, that she was on tiptoe with expectation about something. She was looking more than usually beautiful. He told her so, sitting down beside her.

She gave him in return a bright, soft glance, and

closed the open book. "I wanted to ask you something, dear," she said. "Do you think we could go down to Brittany soon, next week perhaps. . . . I should like it so much."

"Tiens! what an odd idea!" said Armand. His voice sounded indolent and vaguely caressing, but in his mind was surprise, considerable distaste, and a premonition of conflict.

"I don't think that it is odd," urged Horatia earnestly. "I enjoyed Kerfontaine so much in the winter. We shall be going there in May, shall we not? and it is nearly May now."

"Yes, if you consider the middle of April to be nearly May," remarked her husband, putting his hands behind his head and smiling at her with a sort of easy indulgence.

"No, that was a foolish thing to say. But surely it would not matter so very much if we did go in April?"

"I am afraid that it would."

Horatia had been gripping the closed book with a curious intensity. "Why would it matter, Armand? I do want so much to be there."

Armand shifted uneasily. "My dear, I am very sorry——"

"But, Armand, if you are really sorry surely you could arrange it? You see, it is the first thing I have ever asked of you."

She looked so lovely and pleading that the young man was annoyed with destiny, for he would have liked to yield to her. But he had not the slightest intention of losing the way he had already made in his recovered friendship with Madame de Vigerie. He unclasped his hands, sat up, and said firmly, "One has one's own engagements and plans, you know, chère

amie ; it is impossible to put them off and alter them without due cause. I am very sorry, as I said before, but I could not do it."

Horatia leant forward, two bright spots in her cheeks. "Would it then be 'without due cause' if the reason you gave your friends was that I had most particularly asked you to do it ? "

Armand raised his eyebrows. "My dear, I am afraid that is the last reason I could ever give them."

It took a second or two for the stinging though unintentional brutality of this to penetrate, so composedly and gently did it slip out. All the more had it the accent of truth. . . . The brilliant, wandering colour went out of Horatia's face ; she raised one hand a little uncertainly, the book slipped from the other. Then she rose.

"I am much obliged to you for being so outspoken," she said in a slow, rather bewilderd voice. "I think . . . I think I rather admire it. It is better to know. You see, I did not really believe what the Duchesse said ; now I do. Yes, it is better to know . . . ." She ended vaguely, turned, and began to move towards the door of her boudoir.

"Know what ? " asked Armand, uncomfortably conscious that he had struck much harder than he intended. "Horatia, do not go like that. I——"

Horatia did stop, and faced him. "She said that I should make you ridiculous." The words seemed to be forced from her. Then, turning away, and in a very different tone, she added, "But that is impossible, is it not, when you take such good care of yourself ! "

"Horatia, listen to me ! Do not be so foolish ! " cried Armand, springing after her, for she was at the

door. But she went through, and he heard the key turn in the lock.

(3)

The Comtesse Armand de la Roche-Guyon had gathered in her boudoir all the relics that she cared to preserve of Horatia Grenville, and in the place of honour on the mantelpiece stood a silhouette of her father as a young man, gazing straight in front of him with the spirited yet stony gaze of its kind. And, having locked the door, Horatia went almost mechanically towards it, and flinging herself down in the chair, gave way to a tempest of tears—tears of rage, humiliation, and the bitterest disappointment.

While she had, unaided, put on this dress this afternoon, her hands shaking with excitement, she had acted over the scene. Armand would very naturally be surprised at her request, would raise objections perhaps, but in the end—or at the beginning, for the matter of that—he would ask her why she was so set on going to Kerfontaine. And then she would tell him her secret. . . .

And this was the realisation of that dream, this was the shallow pool to which all the sea of rapture of the past had shrunk! "I love him—I have given him everything—I am to bear his child, and he thinks more of his friends' laughter than of me. . . ." No use to fight that tiny doubt that had been growing lately in her heart, that he did not love her as she loved him. . . . But what did that matter, doubt or certainty, for she did not love him any more. "I shall not tell him now," was her thought, joined with that other, half vengeful, half wistful, "Ah, if he only knew!"

She looked up with swimming eyes at the silhouette on the mantelpiece. What was her father doing, poor darling, without her ? Oh, if she could only have gone with her news to him ! A passion of home-sickness came over her ; she was indeed alone in a strange land. She had always known that she was setting out into exile, but by Armand's side it could never have been real banishment. Now . . .

A quarter of an hour later she passed into her bedroom, and, without ringing for her maid, took off her dress, resolving that she would never wear it again, bathed her eyes, put on a négligé and returned to her boudoir. Then, with an heroic attempt at self-discipline, she selected a stiff book from the case and sat down to read it.

(4)

M. le Comte de la Roche-Guyon, when his wife's boudoir door was shut in his face, gave a philosophical little shrug of his shoulders and turned away without more ado. He proceeded to his own apartment, made some changes in his attire, and taking up the book for Madame de Vigerie, set out forthwith to bear it to that lady, trusting that on his return the sky would have cleared.

He did not, however, reach her house in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, for under the chestnut trees in the Tuileries garden he happened upon the Vicomtesse herself, seated with two other ladies upon the straw-bottomed chairs that stood there. He sat down beside her, and, her companions being for the moment engrossed with their own conversation, was able to say to her unheard,

" I was coming to see you. I have got your book."

"So soon?" said she. "You are a marvel; a thousand thanks!" And she held out her hand.

The young man shook his head, smiling. "I was coming to see you," he repeated.

Madame de Vigerie smiled too. "Very well," she said, "But not now, for I am not going home. Come some afternoon next week."

Armand's face fell a little. "That is very much deferred payment," he observed. "And perhaps I may not be in Paris."

"Indeed? And where are you going?"

"My wife is absolutely set on going to Brittany at once."

"But why?"

"Heaven alone knows. I do not."

The Vicomtesse considered a moment, the point of her parasol patterning the gravel. Then a sort of flash passed over her countenance, "You will go," she predicted. "So had you not better give me the book now?"

Armand stared at her, nonplussed by the certainty of her tone and by the mischievous amusement in her face. "Mark my words," she continued, "you will not be here next week—though I am quite aware that you were only using that possibility as a threat. Adieu; my friends, you see, are waiting for me. We shall see who is right. I shall be at St. Clair in June; I suppose I must resign myself to wait for the book till then." And so she left him, outraged with the thought that she considered him the plaything of a wife's idle wishes, and he returned, not too well pleased, to the Rue St. Dominique.

But no sooner had he set foot there than he received a message that the Duchesse desired to see him im-

mediately. Up to the Dowager's suite he then mounted, to find his venerable relative playing piquet with her dame de compagnie.

"Aha! here you are at last!" said the Duchesse, evidently in high good humour. "Masson, you can go. Well, my child, what have you to say for yourself?"

Was it possible—incredible though it seemed—that Horatia had been complaining to Madame de la Roche-Guyon? If so, the old lady had evidently not taken her part.

"What do you want me to say?" enquired the Comte, cautiously.

"What do I want you to say? Armand, you are impayable!" And the Dowager went off into a scream of laughter, causing the little Italian greyhound to spring up shivering in his basket. "Sit down, and tell me why you rushed out of the house directly you had heard the news. I was waiting to send for you to congratulate you."

"To congratulate me? . . . On what?" Enlightenment came in the midst of his wonder. "Juste ciel! So that was why——"

"You don't mean to say that you really did not know—that she did not tell you just now?"

Armand sat down, feeling rather dizzy. "No, not a word. She only said that she wanted to go to Brittany at once, and I—— What a fool I was not to guess!"

"In that sentiment," observed his grandmother, "I fully concur. And what did you say about Brittany?"

"I—well, I refused to go."

The Duchesse appealed to the saints. "It is true, I have always known that men were idiots, but I did think that in you, child, resided what little sense there is in the family. . . . And you refused—you

refused! You, to whom she is to give an heir in December, refused her first request!" More to the same effect was proceeding from the Dowager when her grandson, who had made no attempt to defend himself, suddenly got up.

"I have been worse than a fool, I have been a brute," he said. He was rather white. "Forgive me if I go to her now." And waiting neither for further admonitions nor even for permission he hurriedly kissed her hand and left the room.

So Horatia had not read more than four pages of "Locke on the Human Understanding" (which she was finding, if not consoling, at least astringent against tears) when she heard his knock. Upborne, probably, by the philosopher (for it was the last thing that she wanted to do), she rose, unlocked the door in silence, and returning to her place without so much as looking at the intruder, stood there, one hand on the marble mantelshelf.

But Armand too came without a word to her side, and just when—still not turning or looking at him—she imagined that he was going to speak, perhaps to try to take her in his arms, he dropped on one knee, and taking a fold of her négligé put it silently to his lips.

CHAPTER IX

(I)

In one of the enormous rooms of her château of St. Clair, which not even her taste could make other than oppressive, Laurence-Héloïse de Vigerie sat waiting for her carriage. The apartment, with its six great windows, its consoles of alabaster, its porphyry vases and chandelier of rock-crystal, still kept its air of pomp from the time of Louvois, unsubdued by flowers or books. Even Madame de Vigerie herself had an air of being in perpetual warfare with her stiff surroundings, an appearance of being at this moment, in her pelisse of lemon-yellow silk and her delicate white jacconet gown, something rather incongruous and sylphlike shut up by mistake in a monument.

Sitting near one of the great porphyry vases she looked impatiently at the clock—monumental also—she tapped with her little foot in its lilac cashmere boot ; finally she took a rose out of a jardinière and began to twirl it round and round. In a moment or two her lips parted in a smile. The scent of the rose reminded her of something.

This time last summer, chance having kept her late in Paris, some of these very roses had been sent by her command from St. Clair. Armand de la Roche-Guyon had been with her when, somewhat faded, they had arrived, and he had asked for one. And she remembered how, afterwards, with the fragrance of the dying

roses round her, she had pondered for a little time whether she would marry Armand if he asked her—a contingency obviously likely to occur any day. She had his measure by heart ; she knew his fickleness, was perfectly aware that he was the slave of caprice (his own or another's), but she knew, too, that he always came back to her in the end. For her, with her connections, wealth and position, it was no great match, perhaps, the younger son of an impoverished though very ancient house. Yet sometimes . . . Well, she had never had to make up her mind !

And, after all, he had fallen under the sway of an empire stronger, momentarily, than hers. He had not come back to her ! The news of his English marriage had struck her, it is true, as an affront, but she was persuaded that it was more of a wound to her pride than to her heart. And he would have been so much trouble to keep !

Yet he had some curious quality of charm. How easy, in spite of his defection, it had been to take him back into favour. It was true that she had caused him to feel anything but thoroughly reinstated. . . . And now she was going to return his wife's visit.—Heigho, what an odd world !

Madame de Vigerie had not seen Horatia, having been out when the bride had called, but Armand had described her. Evidently she was beautiful. But that, in the Vicomtesse's experience, did not count for very much, and certainly her own lack of beauty had never troubled her. Laurence de Vigerie was a finished type of the belle laide, dowered with the attraction which, once it has subjugated, can never lose its hold by the mere passage of time. Her power came from other sources than her complexion or her hair. Passing

through life as she did, always a little amused, apparently rather cold, and inclined to experiment, elusive in her relations, absolutely without petty jealousy and very nearly without malice, she had given no cause for scandal, and had driven more men distracted than she cared, sometimes, to remember.

(2)

Horatia put down her embroidery and rose. She was dreading this interview. She was sure that she should not like Madame de Vigerie, and she would probably have to see a good deal of her.

Beneath the four upright ostrich plumes which topped her lemon-yellow bonnet, beneath its wide brim lined with Adelaide-blue crepe, Horatia saw the irregular features of the woman who might have been in her place. And Laurence de Vigerie beheld the chosen bride, the woman preferred before her, serious, rather pale, with a crown of red-gold hair and a simple muslin gown. "She is but a child" was her first thought (instantly corrected), and Horatia's, that the Vicomtesse was not beautiful, not even pretty, as she had expected.

Among her gifts Madame de Vigerie possessed the double power of making the banalities of ordinary intercourse sound interesting, and of getting them over quickly, for in the course of a few minutes they had been left behind, and the two were conversing on more interesting themes.

"You read a great deal, Madame, do you not?"

"I used to," answered Horatia rather wistfully. "I have always been fond of reading French," she added.

"Yes, indeed," said Madame de Vigerie, "it is easy to see that your knowledge of our tongue is profound.

Perhaps if you are not well provided with French books, you would allow me to send you over a few. I daresay the library at Kerfontaine is not very up to date. I know that mine is not, and I have to bring books from Paris. Let me lend you the new book of Hugo's which everyone is devouring, *Notre Dame de Paris.*"

Horatia thanked her warmly, and the visitor went on to admire the garden and the fountain, " which I always envy so much," she said.

Horatia, too, looked out of the window at the little figure.

" I am very fond of it," she said, " and I wish I knew something of its history, for I believe that an ancestor of my husband's brought it from Italy, but I have never been able to find out for certain."

Madame de Vigerie gave her a bright and friendly glance. " I can tell you all about it," she was beginning, when the door opened and Armand came in.

He greeted her with composure. " Do not let me deprive my wife of the information which you were about to give her, Vicomtesse," he said. " Unless, indeed, it be some fashionable detail of which I am better left ignorant."

Madame de Vigerie's eyes, as they rested on him, held a little sprite of mockery which he knew very well. " We were discussing Art," she said gravely. " Since you permit it, Monsieur, I will continue. Madame la Comtesse is doubtless aware that her fountain is a copy of Verrochio's famous boy and dolphin at Florence. But you, Monsieur, have not told her how, in the Italian wars of Louis XII, Raoul de Kerfontaine, your grandfather heaven knows how many times removed on the mother's side, being desirous of bringing a fairing to his lady, decided on this not very portable mark of

his affection; how it took so long to copy and to convey, that when he got back to Brittany the lady was married to another. So he set it up in his own garden and, I daresay, used often to wander round it in the moonlight, poor gentleman, thinking sad thoughts."

"Vicomtesse," said Armand laughing, "you have made that up!"

"Fi donc, Monsieur!" retorted the guest. "You do not know the history of your own family!"

"He is scandalously ignorant," agreed Horatia. "But, Madame, if I may ask, how do you know it so well?"

"Because," replied Madame de Vigerie, "by an odd chance, the lady of M. de Kerfontaine's blighted affections happened to be an ancestress of my husband's. I can show you the tale in a book at St. Clair —not of course that St. Clair in its present state existed then. . . . And so M. le Comte has never shown you, Madame, the inscription which the poor Raoul had carved on the base of the statue?"

"Never. But if you, Madame, would remedy his negligence?"

"Willingly," responded the Vicomtesse. "I am never so happy as when I am imparting information."

Armand unfastened the window and followed them out. The visit was going well. It was long since he had seen Horatia so animated. Feeling that there might be a slight constraint in the situation, he had purposely refrained from coming in until the two women should have broken the ice, and even when he entered had thought it possible that he should find the temperature below freezing point. But you could never tell about women, for they seemed to have taken a fancy to each

other. He followed the yellow pelisse and the white muslin down between the lime-trees, wondering what Laurence was thinking about.

"You see," said Madame de Vigerie, "what the poor man thought of women." She took off a glove and traced with a delicate finger the remains of the eroded lettering round the base of the bronze. "*Cor muliebre his aquis mutabilius*," she read, and Horatia fell an instant convert to the continental mode of pronouncing Latin.

"And was the faithless lady happy?" she asked.

"Supremely, I regret to say. It was only sad for M. le Comte's unlucky ancestor. Mais que voulez-vous? He should not have been so slow. And you had never been told this moving tale?"

"Certainly not," responded Armand. "It is derogatory to my ancestor, and for my part I am little disposed to believe it now."

"In the face of that evidence?" asked Madame de Vigerie, pointing to the statue.

"That inscription is a commonplace known to mankind since the days of Horace," retorted the young man. "It is just as true to-day as then, and is therefore no evidence at all."

The Vicomtesse removed her gaze from him. "Madame, you must not let your husband talk in this manner. But the real evidence is at St. Clair, and if you will promise to come and see me soon I will hunt out the old book.—M. le Comte, would you be good enough to see if my carriage is there?"

Armand went obediently, but when he returned, he found his wife and her visitor strayed into the rose-garden, and talking of gardening matters. Not even when putting the Vicomtesse into her carriage had he

the opportunity of a word alone with her, for Horatia accompanied them. She had apparently been bidden to St. Clair next day.

"I do not invite you, M. le Comte," was Madame de Vigerie's parting remark. "Since you do not believe the legend, research would only bore you, and I want no unwilling converts."

(2)

Tristram Hungerford had been right; the Comte de la Roche-Guyon, young as he was, did consider himself to be thoroughly versed in the ways of women. But there were occasions during the next three or four weeks of his sojourn in Brittany when the connoisseur found himself hopelessly puzzled by the behaviour of the two nearest specimens of the sex, women, too, of whose idiosyncrasies he might have been supposed to have an intimate knowledge—his wife that was and his wife that might have been. That these two, of characters so different, placed in a mutual relationship not of the most comfortable, should become, not mere acquaintances but, apparently, actual friends, was beyond him. And since, in that short space of time, this miracle had happened; since two days did not pass that Laurence did not come over to see Horatia, or Horatia go driving with Laurence, and since miracles were not within his sphere of belief, Armand refused to credit the evidence. He thought that the two women were playing at being friends, for some reason unknown.

But, since Armand had, along with the scepticism, the logical mind of his race, he did not long occupy this position. He could not discover a motive strong enough to produce so much dissimulation. Horatia had

nothing very much to gain from intimacy with Madame de Vigerie ; she would naturally be predisposed against the woman who might have had her place. And as for the Vicomtesse, Armand was not fatuous enough to imagine that she was consciously cultivating a friendship with the wife in order that she might see more of the husband. Indeed, Madame de Vigerie seemed to take especial care that no such flattering thought should find even a momentary lodging in his mind. If he was not definitely excluded from their society—which would in a sense have been complimentary—he was made to feel that his presence or absence was immaterial. His position began to be rather galling, and he strongly suspected Laurence, with her diabolical intuition, of being pleasantly aware of the fact.

He never saw her alone—a consummation which could easily have been brought about had she wished it. Already she had begun to have her house full of guests ; their own, chiefly members of the family, would soon be upon them. But one day he got an opportunity when, coming home from a ride, and going into the garden in search of Horatia he perceived, seated by the fountain in a lilac muslin gown, not his wife, but Madame de Vigerie.

" At last ! " said he, and approached. The Vicomtesse's large hat lay on the ground by her side ; the low sun struck gleams from her brown hair. At his step she looked round.

" How much I envy you this garden," she said, undisturbed. " Above all I love this little green fountain."

Armand sat down on the rim of the basin, facing her.

" Permit me to offer it to you," he said. " It should have been yours this four hundred years or more."

" Ah, my fickle ancestress ! " said Madame de

Vigerie, dabbling her hand in the water. Goldfish from all parts hurried towards it.

"What a bait!" said Armand below his breath. . . . "Where is my wife?"

"Showing a visitor round the garden. You should be there, too."

"Doubtless," replied the Comte, without stirring. He crossed one booted leg over the other, and looked at her. She withdrew her hand, and, shaking it, dried it on her handkerchief.

"Laurence," said the young man suddenly, "don't you think that you are treating me very badly?"

"O, I hope not!" said the Vicomtesse quite seriously.

"We were friends once," said Armand.

"And now—surely not enemies?"

"On my soul, I had rather have you for an enemy than for—an acquaintance!"

"A compliment?" asked the Vicomtesse. "Yes, I suppose it is. . . . Armand, I have fallen in love . . . with your wife."

"If that is, in return, a compliment to me, I thank you."

"Really, I do not know whether it is or no. If you will permit me to say so, I do not know how she came to marry you."

"You find me not worthy?" he inquired.

For the first time Madame de Vigerie smiled, shaking her head slightly. "I will not mount into the pulpit, mon ami, however much you press me. The day when I shall make you a homily is, I hope, distant. Meanwhile, I wish you every happiness, and a son like his mother. . . . Here they are returning."

When the visitor had departed and Armand, too, had vanished, the two friends walked up and down under the limes.

"I have a house full to-morrow," said Madame de Vigerie. "When can you come over and see me quietly, ma chère. Of course you will both dine with us next week."

"The Marquis is coming next week," said Horatia, "and Claude-Edmond. And, rather to my horror, the Duchesse has expressed a desire to stay here. It is a royal command."

"You will be as busy as I for the next few weeks, then?"

Horatia nodded. "Yes, except that this house is not so capacious as St. Clair. I shall not be able to get much time for reading, I expect. I have finished *Ourika*, however, and the other tales of Madame de Duras. I did not admire them very much; perhaps I ought to have done so."

"They had a vogue some years ago," said Madame de Vigerie, "probably because she was a great lady. But I do not think that any woman who keeps a famous salon, as she did, can do much else."

"I do not want to write," said Horatia, "but it is a dream of mine to have a little salon—a literary salon—some day. But my husband does not encourage it."

"Monsieur le Comte is quite right," responded Madame de Vigerie rather unexpectedly. "To have a salon is a life in itself. It is true that the possession of one is a Frenchwoman's ambition in youth, and her glory in old age. But, mon Dieu, what sacrifices does it not entail on her! She can be neither wife, mother, nor lover, and in friendship she can have but one preference—for the most illustrious man whom she can

attract to her gatherings. To retain him there she must sacrifice everything else ; she and all her surroundings must be vowed to his cult. If she cannot procure such a great man for the pivot of her circle she must wear herself out in attentions to a host of lesser lights.—My dear, you are too good for either of these rôles ; do not regret your lost salon ! "

(4)

Madame de Vigerie, being gifted with the seeing eye, found Horatia pathetic. " She is losing him, and she knows it," was her verdict now. In this she was perhaps attributing to the girl more clearness of vision than she had yet attained to, but the tragedy of the situation she had not overestimated.

On arrival at Kerfontaine, Horatia had tried hard to pretend that things were as they had been in January. But the very fact of the attempt had slain the chance of its success. It was idle to wander round the rose-garden, now in fullest leaf and soon to be ablaze ; it had been warmer there under the early snow. Something had gone out of the spirit of the place, and not all the cajolery of May could bring back the thrill of the bare boughs. And yet it was not that she wanted her honeymoon over again. She had no yearnings for the romping happiness of the winter. Then she had been a girl ; now she was a woman. Even in Paris she had realised that the time had come for her and Armand to pass on to another stage—together, and now in the shadow of motherhood she could understand much that had been dark to her before. Never again could their love fail to satisfy, for it had found its fulfilment.

Something of this she tried to hint to Armand one

May evening in the garden. He only said, "You amuse me when you look so serious, Horatia. I don't understand what you are talking about. Those furs become you," (it was a chilly evening,) "you had better wear them always."

They were the words he had used in the winter, and she had thrilled then to hear them. Now they were like a sacrilege. O, why would he not understand! He must enter with her into this new world. She could not, would not know its joys, and perhaps its fears, alone.

She came one day into his sanctum, where he was doing something absorbing with a fowling-piece.

"Are you very busy, dear? Yes, I see you are. I will come another time."

She looked very animated and charming, so the young man laid down the gun and said with a smile, "Of course I will, mon amie. What is it that you want of me?"

"I want you," replied Horatia, mysteriously sparkling, "to come upstairs to the old armoury. I have something to ask you."

He followed her up the staircase, looking at the little curls on the back of her neck. She led him to the big, disused room on the first floor which still held the remains of what had been a fine collection of armour, until the tenantry of Armand's maternal grandfather had ransacked it for weapons during the Revolution, the better to defend him.

"I do not know what you will say to my idea," began Horatia, standing in the midst of the rusty accoutrements. "I thought—but, of course, you will say if you do not like it—that all this armour could be cleaned, and cleared out and arranged along the corridors. There is not very much of it."

"And then?"

"Then . . . if it were possible, this big room might be partitioned into two, or even into three, for nurseries. But perhaps you would rather not. . . ."

It was a delightful subject for discussion, and Horatia was quite ready to discuss, even to give way altogether if he did not approve of her scheme, for she thought it might seem to him rather revolutionary.

"Mais, mon Dieu, for what do you take me?" asked her husband, laughing. "Do you think that I care where these rusty old pots are put? Turn them out anywhere you like, mon amie. It was not necessary to bring me up here to ask that!"

"But the partitioning——"

"Of course. It is an excellent idea. Do just as you like." And he turned to go.

"But, Armand, I thought you would advise me about that. You see, if the day nursery were at this side, where the sun . . ."

The faintest shade of impatience appeared on the young man's face. "My angel," he said, "I am no expert on nurseries. You want a married woman—and a mason. Get Thiébault's people down from Paris to do it properly, if you like; or there is a good man at Rennes. I give you carte blanche, only you must not expect me to arrange it for you. Will you forgive me now—the gamekeeper is coming in a few minutes."

And Armand's thought was, as he ran down the stairs, that of all people he would least have expected Horatia Grenville to turn into a Martha of domesticity. No doubt it was a good thing for the prospects of his heir, but what if he were going to be pursued by entreaties for advice about this and that detail! He was not in the least disappointed in his marriage. He was a

Frenchman ; marriage was an affair of arrangement, not of rapture. He had been luckier than most, for he had had the rapture too. He possessed a beautiful wife, approved of by his family, who might be trusted never to put him in the always ludicrous position of the betrayed husband. He would also have an heir. If, now, his wife would but consent to settle down, after their brief idyll of passion, into the dignified mistress of his household, and would not make uncomfortable claims upon him, he need never regret having lost his head over her in Berkshire. Her perceptions must be much less acute than he had imagined if she could not see that the bonds of matrimony in her adoptive country held in a different fashion from those of her own. However, no doubt everything would right itself in time ; it would be a good thing when the boy was born.

Upstairs, among the plundered armour, Horatia stood with her head against the window and cried.

CHAPTER X

(I)

YET, three weeks later, on the eve of the arrival of her guests, Horatia was banishing the paperers and plasterers from the nearly finished nurseries.

She had made a valiant effort, not only to hide from Armand the fact that he had deeply wounded her by his lack of interest, but even to deny it to herself. At any rate she would not give way to pique in the matter ; she would carry it through alone, and it was very kind of him not to have raised difficulties. Henceforth she must try to accommodate herself to him in every way, and she set forward almost with ardour on this fatal course of submission—fatal because, if she had but realised it, nothing appealed less to her husband than such an attitude. He preferred something more spirited. Madame de Vigerie, had she consulted her on this as on other matters, would have given her very different advice on the management of men, but Horatia was too proud and too loyal for such a course. She kept telling herself that she must make allowances for differences of race ; in which consideration it was not given to her to see that if she herself had been French she would not have taken the affair so seriously.

And when she had got rid of the workmen she had to entertain her guests. The Dowager Duchess had not been to Kerfontaine for many years. Her coming

was evidently designed as a great honour to the young couple. It was certainly a stirring event. Armies of servants preceded and accompanied her ; she travelled in her own antiquated carriage. Jean had wept in his mistress's presence at the news of her approach, but whether from joy or terror or a mixture of both Horatia was not sure, and indeed the house was moved to its foundations. Would the Duchesse find her rooms cold, damp, or uncomfortable ? It was some sort of a consolation to feel certain that she was not likely, in that case, to suffer silently.

However, after a few days, Madame de la Roche-Guyon, finding her quarters to her liking, commanded that her old friend the Comtesse de Léridant should also be invited, and she came, an old lady of aggressive piety, hung with medals, who cast up her eyes all day long at "dear Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon" when the latter paid a flying visit. Madame de Beaulieu also came, the family having intimated to Horatia that she must ask her, and flirted with Armand under the nose of her husband, whom she brought with her. The Marquis de Beaulieu, a middle-aged, bald-headed and very uninteresting nobleman attempted unsuccessfully to retaliate by flirting with Horatia. Finally, Emmanuel and his son completed the party, and in the youngest of her guests Horatia found an unexpected well of consolation.

Claude-Edmond, solemn as ever, had always shown a disposition to attach himself to his young aunt, and it sometimes occurred to Horatia that she might try to make him less like a budding philosopher and more of an ordinary boy. She had once or twice asked him what games he played at the Lycée ; no clear impression had resulted from his answers, and at any rate

he could not play alone. The only relaxation he seemed to permit himself at Kerfontaine was a game of chess in the evening with his father. And always it was, "Ma tante, if you are walking may I accompany you?" "Ma tante, may I assist you to gather the flowers?" Sometimes Horatia pitied him intensely; sometimes she could have shaken him.

Then one day, snatching a moment from her guests to go up and look at the nurseries, she overtook Claude-Edmond slowly climbing the staircase that led to them.

"Where are you going, Claude?" she asked. "If you are looking for the old armoury, you will not find it, I am afraid."

The boy turned an amazed face to her. "Has it gone? What is there, then?"

"It has been turned into nurseries. Would you like to see them?"

Mounting beside her, her nephew assented. "But for what purpose do you need nurseries? I have not seen any baby."

"There is no baby yet," returned Horatia gravely. "But I feel sure that before very long the marchande des choux will bring me one, or perhaps I shall find one under a cabbage in the garden, as you know, Claude, one does find them. So I thought it best to begin getting things ready."

"But certainly," agreed Claude-Edmond with his wisest air. "Though I have been told that it is not the marchande des choux after all . . ."

"Never mind," interrupted Horatia quickly. "Come in and see how the room is altered. It is ready for the furniture now."

No one would have dreamed that the rooms had once been an armoury. Horatia had followed the

new mode of a trellised paper covering not only the walls but the ceiling also, so that the effect, as Madame de Vigerie had remarked, was of a cage of flowers to imprison the angelic visitant. But Horatia intended all the arrangements to be English, and this design, which she had never told her husband, she now found herself confiding to the small French boy who stood drinking in all she said with such serious attentive eyes.

"Nobody knows, Claude. Shall we keep it as our secret? When I was a little girl at home, my bed stood here, as it were, and from it I could see in the morning the birds hopping about in the trees outside —a silver birch it was—and singing, singing . . ."

Oh, home, home, and the unforgettable memories, bitter and sweet at once, of those early mornings!

"You are not crying, ma tante?" asked Claude-Edmond a little anxiously, as she stopped.

"No, no . . . I was only wishing there were a birch tree here too."

"We could easily find one and put it there," said the boy, at once sympathetic.

Horatia smiled through the mist in her eyes. "There is something I should like almost better—a big screen such as I used to have at the foot of my bed, all covered over with pictures from children's books."

"But that we could make," suggested the practical Claude-Edmond.

"Why, of course we could!" exclaimed his aunt, struck with the idea. "Claude, you are a genius! There are plenty of screens in the house. . . . We will do it up here, secretly, just we two—if you like Claude."

"*If I like!*" exclaimed the boy, enraptured.

And that was why the mistress of the house often

spent so much time in reposing herself in the afternoon, and why Emmanuel sometimes sought his son in vain at the same hour. Both absentees might have been found, surrounded by litter and paste, playing at being children again in the nursery.

Even Madame de Vigerie did not share their secret, for her great house was now so full of guests that the informal intercourse of the early summer was impossible, though visits of ceremony were exchanged on both sides. Life at Kerfontaine was however less unsociable than in the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon, for in the evening all the inmates gathered round the domestic hearth, playing bouts-rimés, cards or loto, or doing fancy-work. On one such evening in mid-June all the company was thus assembled in the salon: the Duchesse, Mme. de Léridant, Emmanuel and M. de Beaulieu were playing cards, Claude-Edmond was deep in a book, while Horatia and the Marquise de Beaulieu, the one embroidering, the other painting on gauze, were listening to the gallantries of a superannuated beau of the neighbourhood, who had been dining with them, when suddenly the Vicomtesse de Vigerie was announced.

She came in looking, for the first time, to Horatia's eyes, almost beautiful, and having the effect of being at once pale and flushed, breathless and collected. Horatia hurried to greet her, and Armand to relieve her of the cloak about her shoulders.

"I have news," said she, "news of the greatest importance. You have not heard? . . . I thought that perhaps M. le Duc. . . Let me pay my respects first to the Duchesse." Smiling, excited, she curtsied to that venerable dame, and then said, like a herald, "The Regent has left England for Italy!"

(2)

If Horatia was in any doubt as to the significance of Madame de Vigerie's announcement that evening, and puzzled at the enthusiasm with which it was received, the weeks that followed amply enlightened her. That the Duchesse de Berry, Regent for her little son, should have left her royal father-in-law at Holyrood, meant only one thing, that she was meditating a bold stroke of some kind. Neapolitan by birth, she gravitated naturally towards Italy, and for the next month, while she was slowly traversing Holland, Germany and Switzerland, a continual state of ferment reigned at Kerfontaine and St. Clair. Madame de Vigerie was in exceptionally close touch with the princess, for she had a cousin in her small retinue, and St. Clair became in consequence a kind of Mecca for the Legitimists of the neighbourhood. The atmosphere of intrigue grew still thicker when in mid-July the devotees heard that Madame de Berry, arrived at Sestri, had opened direct communication with some of the Legitimist leaders, settled there to that end, and was proportionately agitated when, a little later, it was announced that Carlo Alberto of Sardinia, under pressure from the French ambassador at Turin, had intimated that the princess must leave his territory. However, as the Duchesse did not fail piously to point out, good emerged in this case from evil, for Marie-Caroline in consequence removed to Massa, and here she could conspire in comfort, since its ruler had refused to recognise Louis-Philippe. Here indeed, cordially received, and with the ducal palace at her disposal, she set up a little court, and now the question was how best to prepare for the rising which was to

take place in the West when the Regent should set foot in France to claim the heritage of her son.

Before, however, this matter became at all pressing, Horatia's guests had gradually drifted away—the Duchesse back to Paris, Emmanuel and his son on another visit. M. and Mme. de Beaulieu were the last to leave. Unknown to Horatia, the Marquise signalised her departure by a speech which was not without its consequences.

"A thousand thanks for your charming hospitality, my dear cousin," she had said to Armand as they stood for a moment together on the steps. "Now that I am no longer able to play guardian angel, do not make too conspicuous use of your freedom and go to see a certain lady too often!"

A dozen people might have said these words to Armand without offence, but he had never loved his kinswoman, and his displeasure was instant on his face. The Marquise laughed her high little laugh.

"Touché?" she enquired. "Yes, I counsel you to be careful, Don Juan. I have warned our dear Horatia not to put too much faith in these constant political interviews at St. Clair."

"I can hardly credit you with so much vulgarity," retorted Armand freezingly, and the Marquise went unescorted down the steps.

Although the departure of the Duchesse was a great relief, and although Horatia always preferred Madame de Beaulieu's room to her company, it was a little dull when the party had broken up. August was over the land, hot and languid; the country had lost its freshness, the gardens flagged. And since Madame de Vigerie, and Armand with her, had thrown herself with ardour into the scheme for organ-

ising revolt in Brittany, she was really too busy for Horatia to see much of her. Armand, too, was always riding hither and thither. On one occasion he went as far as Nantes, to interview the newly-formed Royalist committee there, and talked sometimes of crossing the Loire into Vendée, where the embers of the great insurrection of '93 were being fanned to flame. But though these avocations took him so much away from her Horatia was not sorry. She felt that she had misjudged him; he *was* capable of enthusiasm for a cause, and a losing cause, and his attitude about the Lilies had not been a pose, as she had sometimes been tempted to think. That nothing would ever come of these efforts (as she was convinced) did not displease her, and she never imagined her husband paying any penalty for conspiracy about which there seemed to be so much unguarded talk.

She had therefore no protests for him when he announced, one morning at the end of August, that he proposed to ride over to sound an old gentleman living some miles away in the direction of Guéméné. This person was a rich Royalist of an exceedingly miserly disposition, who, could he be induced to unlock his coffers for the cause, would be worth gaining. But Horatia felt more than usually lonely after her husband had gone; it was now increasingly difficult for her to read, for she seemed to have lost her powers of concentration, and the attempt made her head ache. So in the afternoon she drove over to St. Clair to see her friend—and had, on the way, a curious hallucination of seeing Armand, or someone exactly like him and his horse, appear for a moment on the road that crossed her own. But he was too far off for her impression to be anything but a surmise, and she supposed she was mistaken.

Disappointment awaited her at St. Clair. Madame la Vicomtesse was not receiving, and Horatia was fain to drive home again. Armand returned from his expedition only in time to change his clothes for dinner. He was very cheerful and conversational during the meal, and it was not till the servants had left the room that Horatia asked suddenly,

"Armand, have you a double in these parts?"

"Not that I am aware of," responded her husband tranquilly, without looking up from the apple that he was peeling. "Why?"

"Because, when I went over to St. Clair this afternoon, I saw someone so like you in the distance, and of course it could not have been you—unless you changed your mind, and did not go to M. des Charnières after all."

"I do not know who it could have been, but it certainly was not I," responded Armand, the apple-paring steadily growing in length. "So you went to see Madame de Vigerie this afternoon?"

"I went, but I did not see her. She was not receiving. Tell me about your visit to M. des Charnières."

"It was not a success," returned the emissary, shrugging his shoulders. "The old gentleman is not going to part with his money for anything less than absolute certainty. He is of a meanness that leads him into curious extravagances. Conceive, ma chère, that when he goes to Paris, he so hates paying hotel bills that he has bought and furnished a house at each of the stages. Of course he has had to instal servants also, but he can bear all that better than paying at the time for a night's board and lodging. He received me politely enough, in the only living-room of the château that he occupies, and, taking

snuff the whole time, he detailed to me the various reasons why the Regent could never succeed in her attempt. I shall not waste my energies over him again."

(3)

The long mirror in Madame de Vigerie's salon, which terminated not far from the floor in a marble shelf supported on curved legs, held the reflections of a Psyche in marble, many thin-legged gilt chairs, a fête champêtre after Watteau, and of two persons seated, pen in hand, on opposite sides of a chilly inlaid table, and sedulously bent over sheets of paper. The scribes were the mistress of the house and Armand de la Roche-Guyon, and for at least an hour they had been copying a list of the names of persons willing to bear arms for the Duchesse de Berry in the Pontivy division.

The Comte finished his task the first, but Madame de Vigerie, following with one taper finger the roll of names, proceeded with hers for a few moments longer, though she could scarcely have been unconscious that the young man opposite, leaning back in his chair, was gazing at her in a manner not specially suggestive of political absorption.

At last she too came to the end.

"There are a hundred and forty more names in the other list," she said, biting the feathers of the pen, and looking across at her fellow copyist.

"My fingers are quite stiff," protested Armand. "What yours must be I cannot think."

"I am afraid, mon ami, that yours are not used to the pen," remarked the Vicomtesse. "Indeed, I do not know what they are used to."

"Well, perhaps they will handle the sword one day," returned the Comte unperturbed. "I know well that you do not think them capable of it, but you will see, Madame!"

"You would never do for a soldier," said she. "You are too lazy and too insubordinate.—De grâce, do not leave the table until you have put your list into some sort of order! Then give it to me."

"Insubordinate, forsooth!" muttered Armand, obeying her. "And lazy, ma foi! Do not ask me to copy any more lists for you!"

"I shall not have the opportunity of doing so," said the Vicomtesse, taking the papers that he handed over. "I am thinking of returning to Paris next week."

"Great Heavens, why? Next week—it is only the beginning of September!"

"I know," murmured Madame de Vigerie, busy with the papers. "But I have to go. . . . . One, two, three, five—where is page four?"

"Confound page four! Laurence, cease being a conspirator and be a human woman. . . . You cannot go suddenly like that!"

"Four, five, six, seven, eight," finished the Vicomtesse. "Please give me one of the pins at your elbow. I am not going to Paris for the cause, but for my own affairs. I regret it, but I shall have to go. Do not look so sulky; it is not polite."

In answer to this Armand got up, and, turning his back on her with very little ceremony, went to the window. Laurence de Vigerie immediately stopped arranging her papers, and, had he but known it, there was a very different expression in her eyes when his own gaze was removed from her, and she looked at him unwitnessed.

"I shall follow you to Paris," announced the Comte de la Roche-Guyon after a moment's silence.

"Indeed you will not," riposted Madame de Vigerie. "For one thing you are not to leave your wife. I am sorry to deprive myself of her company."

"I wish," broke out the young man petulantly, swinging round from the window, "that you would leave my wife out of this!"

The Vicomtesse laid down the lists and rising went over to him. "Listen to me, Armand," she said quietly. "We know each other very well . . . at least, I know you very well. I am your friend; you know that—but I shall never be anything else to you. I have much feeling for your wife, and I shall never permit you, if I can prevent it, to do anything that may wound her. If you follow me to Paris, if you come here again, as you did last Wednesday when you meant to go to see poor M. des Charnières, I shall not admit you. When you return to Paris in the ordinary course of events, with your wife, I shall be very glad if you come and see me as usual; and she has been good enough to ask me to visit her. . . . Now do not bear me malice for speaking plainly, and let us be friends again."

Armand looked down at the little hand which she laid for an instant on his folded arms, but which, perceiving the tremor which ran through him at her touch, she instantly withdrew.

"I wonder," he said slowly, "if there is such a thing as a good devil? If there is, you are it."

"Merci! Well, now my homily is over, shall we copy the other list?"

"Not now," said Armand, his eyes burning. "Give it to me and I will copy it for you at home. . . ,

No, do not fear, I will not disturb the mysteries of your preparations for departure by bringing it in person. I will send it. . . . Good-bye, then, till Paris; I do not know when that will be." He took her hand and kissed it coldly; and thereafter made his exit with a good deal of dignity.

And the mirror then reflected a curious thing; the little figure of Madame de Vigerie sitting once more at the marble table with her hands locked over her eyes—not at all the untouched moralist. Fickle, selfish, worthless, she knew Armand to be all these, but directly he was gone she wished him back. He was too light to be worth a moment's serious thought; why, then, did she think of him so much? Sometimes, when he had been with her, she had a vision of what he would be in thirty years' time, a cynical viveur stained with the print of past and present excesses; sometimes she wished that she could save him, but did not see any way. Sometimes she had a strange maternal yearning towards him. But now, this afternoon, when she had spoken so plainly, there was something more in her heart—dismay, and a sense of conflict.

When the list of names arrived in a couple of days' time, it was addressed in Horatia's writing and had no enclosure with it.

CHAPTER XI

(1)

It was at Chartres, on the homeward journey to Paris, that Armand's ingenious idea first occurred to him, and that he matured it, pacing by moonlight round the Place des Epars. During that promenade there was fully revealed to him the means whereby he might break Madame de Vigerie's friendship with his wife.

The fortnight which had followed the Vicomtesse's departure from St. Clair had given him ample time for reflection. That he should be prevented from seeing as much as he wished of Laurence because Laurence had entered upon a tiresome and totally unnecessary friendship with Horatia, was preposterous. This friendship was evidently the cause of Madame de Vigerie's very annoying attitude towards him. It behoved him to take some step about it. Still more did he see the necessity of this when he discovered part of the reason why Horatia was suddenly as anxious to get back to Paris as she had been to come down to Brittany. She missed Madame de Vigerie.

And this, it seemed to Armand, was carrying matters too far. It was ridiculous in itself; worse, it put him, in his own eyes at least, in a ludicrous position. Moreover, Horatia's submissive attitude had finished by getting on his nerves. Not that he was dissatisfied with his bargain; every husband, he supposed, had some-

thing to put up with. Only he intended to have what he wanted in another quarter to boot.

Horatia was far enough from guessing the source of the preoccupation which was visible in him during the last few days of their stay at Kerfontaine, nor had she the faintest idea why he was in such good spirits the morning that they left Chartres. He judged it wiser, however, not to put his plan into operation for two or three days after their return to the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon, which still lacked the presence of Emmanuel and his son, but which was re-adorned by that of the Duchesse. On the fourth morning he came into Horatia's boudoir looking unusually grave, with his hands full of papers.

"I have something to tell you, my dear, which you will not like hearing, I am afraid," he said, looking down at her as she sat at her writing table, an unfinished letter to her father under her hand.

Horatia's colour went. "No bad news from England, I hope?" she said, and looking at her frail, startled face, Armand had a momentary pang of remorse for what he was about to do. But it did not turn him from his purpose, and he told her, gently, and with apparent consideration, that all communication between the Hôtel and Madame de Vigerie must cease for the present. The Government was opening a wakeful eye upon both parties and was only waiting for some tangible evidence of conspiracy to move against them. He had this information, he said, from an unimpeachable source.

Horatia said very little, only her eyes slowly filled with tears, and seeing this Armand went away to the mantelpiece behind her. He was enjoying his ingenuity less than he had expected.

"Then I cannot write to her, for you will not be seeing her either?" came his wife's voice after a moment.

"No, certainly I shall not be seeing her," replied the Comte, studying the Rector's coal-black profile, and wishing that this further sacrifice to truth were not involved in his plan. "It would be very serious for her if she became further suspect to the Government; it would be very serious for me also. Even my friend might lose his place if it were known that he had warned us. I daresay that it will only be for a time. . . . Of course I need not ask for your promise, Horatia, that you will not communicate with her in any way?"

She made no answer, and looking round Armand saw that she had her handkerchief to her eyes, though not a sound escaped her. He bit his lip, hesitated, then went and bent over her.

"My dear, I am so sorry," he said—and he *was* sorry. "See, I must go this evening and tell her—she does not know yet—and you would like to write just this once to her, would you not? and I will take the letter for you."

(2)

Some compensation for the discomfort of this little scene was undoubtedly afforded to its author by the reflection that the Vicomtesse would not be so easy to dupe. Conceivably, even, he might fail to persuade her of his good faith. The prospect of a battle of wits was exhilarating, if momentous.

But his star, good or evil, fought for Armand, putting into his pocket Horatia's depressed note to her friend—convincing in that she, at least, had no doubts—

surrounding Madame de Vigerie that evening with an unusually large circle of habitués, and thus giving the Comte de la Roche-Guyon the opportunity of displaying in the midst of them so gloomy and dejected an air that his hostess could not fail to observe it, and yet was unable at once to penetrate to its cause. At last she beckoned him aside into the embrasure of a window.

"What on earth is the matter with you this evening?" she demanded. "You look as if you had been to a funeral."

Armand did not smile. On the contrary he told her his tale, garnishing it, as was necessary for her more expert ear, with preciser details. The Vicomtesse was plainly staggered.

"But that is absurd!" she ejaculated. "The Government cannot possibly connect—Tiens, I will ask M. de Chateaubriand before he goes." And she looked across to where the great man, his fine white head supported on his hand, was standing in a favourite attitude with his arm on the chimney-piece, an elevation which his want of stature must have rendered difficult of comfortable attainment.

Armand laid a hand on her arm. "I implore you to do nothing of the sort. It will ruin my friend if this gets about. It is far best to submit, for prudence' sake, to precautions which may only be temporary. Needless to say that I intend, however, to come and see you sometimes—if you, too, will run the risk—but, of course, it cannot be openly. . . . Meanwhile, here is a note which I promised my wife to bring; but you must on no account communicate with her."

"But if I am to see you occasionally, I can communicate through you," protested Madame de Vigerie still amazed.

" This once, yes, for she knows that I am here, but in the future, to avoid alarming her, I shall not tell her when I come. Perhaps, indeed, it will be better for me not to come for a few weeks. It will depend on what my friend says."

But here the Vicomtesse, visibly perplexed, was reft from him by M. le Vicomte de Chateaubriand, desiring to take his leave. . . And Armand's luck held, for Chateaubriand, head as he was of the Royalist Committee of Paris, strongly disapproved of the tendency to push matters to too sudden an issue displayed by the younger and more extravagant spirits of the party, and he cast a glance of disapproval upon the Comte de la Roche-Guyon.

" Do not, Madame," he said in a low tone, " commit any imprudence just now. The time is not ripe, and the Government is on the watch." He bowed over her hand, and passed on.

After this unexpected reinforcement it seemed to the Comte more diplomatic not to outstay the rest, as he often did, but of a prudence more finished to leave Madame de Vigerie still under the empire of M. de Chateaubriand's warning and his own unusual caution —his, who had often been reproached by her for recklessness—and uneasy, perhaps, at the possible cessation of his visits. But before he left the Vicomtesse had found time to scribble a pencil note to Horatia (which he punctually delivered) and to say that if it must be so, she could see him alone next Friday, but that she did not wish him to run risks. To which he replied with suitable gravity that if he considered it unwise, he would not come, and so departed, having accomplished his object and gained to boot the spice of clandestine intercourse.

He had, moreover, the fortitude not to go on the appointed Friday after all, and, when he appeared the following week in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, to come armed with so many statistics of the progress of Royalism in the West, and to keep so strictly to conversation on the Duchesse de Berry's plans, that Madame de Vigerie was thoroughly deceived. But gradually, almost as imperceptibly as September merged into October, and the scorched leaves said farewell to the trees of the Luxembourg and the Tuileries, the stolen meetings lost something of the political character which had given them birth. Laurence de Vigerie was hardly conscious of the change, or, at least, she shut her eyes to it. She only knew that she missed him when he did not come. And Armand came more and more frequently.

(3)

And so, after all, the object for which Horatia had wanted to return to Paris—Laurence's society—was not to be hers. She did not seem to desire that of anyone else, and yet she was very lonely. She went out driving, perhaps, for an hour or two, but she neither paid nor received calls now. Always once a day at least Armand would come to see her. He was very bright and very polite, and almost punctilious in his enquiries after her health, but it was apparent to her that, these courteous formalities at an end, he was anxious to make his exit, to pursue his own avocations, whatever they might be. She did not attempt to detain him. She would reply to him cheerfully, never admit that she had a headache or felt tired, and he would kiss her hand and say, "Do not wear out your eyes

over that embroidery, my dear; why not go to the Rue Neuve des Augustins and order as much as you want?"

Once or twice when he had shut the door and gone out, and the great house seemed settled into silence, she lay back on her couch and cried a little. She was very homesick. A dreadful lassitude took possession of her, and she began to feel afraid. Horatia was not used to illness. On the few occasions when she had had a sore throat or some such slight indisposition, the Rector had read to her by the hour, and enquiries would come twice a day from Tristram, accompanied by flowers or grapes or the latest "Edinburgh Review" which he had ridden into Oxford to fetch for her. All this attention she had then taken for granted, almost as her due, and now that she could not longer command it she seemed to herself but a poor creature after all, for she had come to have only one conscious wish, that some one should take care of her and understand. It was not that these new relatives were not considerate, but that their solicitude seemed to spring from a different source, and sometimes it almost irritated her. She felt as if she were in a palace, stifled by the precautions taken to ensure the safe entrance into the world of an heir apparent.

But at the worst she found always a spring of secret joy, and this was in itself a surprise. Before her marriage she had never been able to analyse her feelings about children. Just as she had supposed that in some distant future she would marry (in spite of her protestations to the contrary) so also she imagined that she would have children of her own. But that she should ardently desire to hold her own child in her arms was an astonishment. In the picture she

had made of him he was never a very small baby. He appeared to her always as a child of eighteen months or two years, and he had red-gold curls and grey eyes. It was only after some time that she realised she was thinking of a miniature of herself which hung in her father's bedroom. It had never so much as occurred to her that Maurice might be like Armand. For as she had settled that the child would be a boy, so had she fixed upon the English form of his name, by which she meant always to call him. He would of course have a string of French names; she had heard them several times: Maurice after his father, whose second name it was (and fortunately Maurice was an English name as well, though her English pronunciation of it would probably give offence), and Stanislas after the Duc, and Victor after the Dowager (suppose he should be like the Dowager!), and Etienne after her own father, and Marie, or Anne, or Elisabeth, she had forgotten which, and probably Charles after the dethroned monarch.

Almost every day now mysterious cases and parcels arrived, addressed to her and bearing an English postmark; a bath, painted on the outside with a design of blue loops and knots, had recently found its way into the Hôtel. In a fortnight an English nurse was expected, chosen by Aunt Julia, and she would have plenty of time to become accustomed to the ways of the house before her services would be needed. The married ladies of the family made their own comments when they heard that all the babyclothes which Horatia had not made herself had been sent direct from England, and there was much hostile criticism on the proposed addition of an English nurse to the household. However, Armand had let it be known that his wife

should not be thwarted, and as she did not trouble him about arrangements he was only too glad for her to amuse herself in such a harmless fashion. The nurseries had been decorated by a well-known Paris firm, and Horatia was pleased with the cream panelling of the walls, and the cream curtains with their sprays of pink roses caught up with pale blue ribbons, and lined with deep rose pink to give a warm glow to the room.

The day that the painters and decorators left she had a sudden idea. There was in her boudoir a copy in oils of that beautiful Madonna of Raphael's, which Ferdinand III of Tuscany, discovering in a peasant's cottage, so loved that it hung always over his bed. Some privileged person apparently had obtained permission to have it copied ; the copy had somehow found its way to a dealer's, and the Duc de la Roche-Guyon, on an Italian tour, had bought it and presented it to his wife, Armand's mother. It had made little appeal to Horatia at first, but of late she had come to love it, congratulating herself on being able to discriminate between the natural beauty of this picture of a mother and her child, and its superstitious associations. Her fancy now was to have the work of art, in its heavy Florentine frame, removed from her sitting-room and hung over the mantelpiece in the day nursery. In these rather unusual surroundings it could reign alone, and later on it would be company for her and Maurice.

The order was executed by rather bewildered servants, who secretly wondered what Madame la Comtesse would command to be done next, and Horatia, in the growing dusk, went to look at the effect. The result was beyond her expectations.

She sat down and gazed for a long time at the simplicity, purity, and calm of the fair face. Suddenly she

bent forward, and, hardly knowing what she was doing, held out her arms to it with an indescribable gesture at once of entreaty and of offering, and then as suddenly leant back in her chair, and covering her face with her hands began to cry. She was terribly lonely. But it was not for long now. It was not for long that she would hold out empty arms. . . .

(4)

The next day it rained in torrents from an early hour, the persistent rain of autumn. Armand was away, but this was nothing unusual. The post brought her no fresh parcels, and it was too wet to go out driving, and her boudoir without the familiar picture seemed forlorn. Seeking for a diversion she told Martha to light the fire in the nursery.

"Yes, certainly, my lady," responded Mrs. Kemblet, delighted, "and perhaps you would like to count through the things Polly sent over yesterday, and there is the christening robe to be put away."

"Of course, I had forgotten," said Horatia. "We will be very busy, and pretend we are at home in England."

It was dusk before mistress and maid had finished their task, and the last heap of small white garments had been arranged, and the last drawer returned to its place in the wide press against the wall. Horatia gave a sigh of satisfaction. The occupation had soothed her.

"Now, Martha, if you will bring me a cushion I shall want nothing more. Just put that easy chair by the fire, and a footstool, and I shall sit here till dinner time. If anyone asks for me you can say I am resting."

She was tired with the small extra exertion, but, for

some reason extraordinarily happy this afternoon. As a rule the hours between four and six o'clock were the longest, but to-night they hardly seemed long enough. She settled herself deeper in the chair, looked up once at the picture, and closed her eyes. She had so much to think about.

* * * * *

An hour later and Armand's voice was saying, "Horatia, Horatia, what are you doing here? It is very cold in this room; you will be chilled. I cannot think what possessed you to come and sit in such a barn, though I hardly liked to wake you, for you were smiling about something."

CHAPTER XII

(1)

HORATIA had been so little in shops of late that it was quite a pleasure to find herself again in Herbault's, whither, the day after this episode, she had gone on her afternoon drive. Smiling assistants hurried forward in the big mirrored room, and when they found that she only required a few yards of fine lace to match a pattern, which she drew from her reticule, they were just as eager to serve her as if she had been ordering one of their most expensive hats. Would Madame la Comtesse be seated, and they would see what could be done; was not the original lace from the border of a hat frilling which Madame had of them in the spring? It was, said Horatia, and she wanted some more if they still had it.

"Madame la Comtesse will permit me to observe that frillings round the face are out of date now," said the assistant doubtfully. "As Madame sees, we are not using any at present." She waved her hand at the rows of hats and bonnets perched on their stands.

Horatia smiled a little. "I want it for a different purpose—for a small cap," she said. "I liked the pattern so much, and I thought that if it would not give you too much trouble to find it . . ."

Nothing was too much trouble to serve Madame, she was assured, and the young milliner fluttered away.

Horatia felt pleasantly languid, content to study the

latest creations, and to look at those who were trying them on. Not far away a customer was viewing, with satisfaction, a béret of brilliant violet velvet, trimmed with acanthus green, and quite close to her, on her left, was a large gilt screen, behind which, to judge from the conversation which flowed over it, two ladies were trying on canezous, or blouses, and gossiping at the same time. Horatia heard that though some unnamed "she" passed for one of the best dressed women in Paris, the speaker, for her part, thought otherwise. The other lady laughed, and said, "Are you not prejudiced, ma chère, because she would not receive your cousin aftre his little affair—you know what I mean?"

The first lady was plainly roused at this. "It was abominable of her!" she exclaimed. "And poor Georges, he was terribly chagrined about it. Besides, what business has she to set herself up as so much better than her neighbours, when everybody knows that she is overfond of Florian?"

"I thought that was only gossip," said the other.

"Gossip! when she sees him nearly every day! Why, everybody knows it. It began this summer when they were down in the country. I know that for a fact; and now, if you doubt it, come and stay in my appartement and you will see him go into her house every day as regular as clockwork, at hours when she receives no one else. I will wager you he is there now."

"After all," remarked the second lady thoughtfully, "it would be rather natural, when he was, as report says, so near marrying her. And certainly it would be difficult to be hardheartetd where he is concerned. But it does not fall in with what we heard of his fondness for his wife. Why, they were always about together at one time!"

"Like Armand and me!" thought Horatia with a rather bitter amusement. "What an offence it must have been! I wonder who is this too-attractive 'Florian.'" Here the milliner brought her a card of lace of the pattern required, but a little too wide, intimating, however, her willingness to go back and have another search for the narrower kind.

By the time that the girl had gone off again on her errand there were signs that the ladies on the other side of the screen were departing. "Yes, send me those two canezous, the pink and the white . . . I don't think Herbault's cut is as good as it used to be . . . Shall I drive you anywhere, Elise? You are leaving your reticule.—By the way, I forgot to tell you the cream of the business about Florian's poor wife, as you call her, the Englishwoman. She and Madame de Vigerie were bosom friends at one time—isn't it amusing?" They rustled away.

"Madame is ill!" said the young milliner anxiously. "Shall I get a glass of water—some eau-de-vie? If Madame would but sit down again!"

Horatia, as white as death, was standing up, supporting herself by the back of her chair. Seeing that she did not even appear to understand what was said to her, the girl hastily fetched an older assistant. Horatia's maid was also summoned from her errands in another part of the shop, but by the time she arrived her mistress appeared to have recovered herself, and was able, in a few minutes, to return to her carriage.

Once there, deaf to the solicitous inquiries of Joséphine, and almost, indeed, ignorant of her own purpose, Horatia gave the order to drive to Madame de Vigerie's house in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin.

She had no conscious thoughts during the short transit. There was no time for them—no room in her head, round which a piercing band seemed to be drawn, suffocating them. But when the carriage began to slacken something external to herself said:

"You cannot go in. Ask at the porter's lodge if he is still there, and say you have come to drive him home. Then you will know!"

And she told the footman this. He disappeared under the archway. It might yet all be a horrible lie. The concierge would be astonished, would tell the man that M. de la Roche-Guyon never came there now.

The footman came back to the carriage and said respectfully:

"M. le Comte left about a quarter of an hour ago, Madame."

"I am too late, then," said Horatia quietly. "Home, please."

(2)

Four or five dried specimens of rare seaweeds, neatly fastened with slips of paper to little cards, lay before the Marquis de la Roche-Guyon on his writing-table, and he was agreeably occupied in identifying them, for he was contemplating a monograph on the algæ of France. He would shortly have to ring for a light, but, like all absorbed persons, he preferred working under conditions which were momentarily becoming worse to getting up to the bell. There is always a spark of hope, never realised, that the decline of daylight will somehow be arrested.

However, though Emmanuel would not interrupt himself, he was interrupted, with the last seaweed under a magnifying glass, by a knock.

" Come in," he called out, rather vexed. On removing his gaze from the brown fronds, he beheld his sister-in-law.

" O, come in, my dear sister," he said, springing to his feet. " Permit me to clear you a chair. I fear there is not an empty one in the room. It is rather dark—I will ring for lights."

" Please do not trouble," returned Horatia. " I only wanted to ask you a trifling question.—How far is the château of Rosdael from Kerfontaine ? "

Emmanuel, already on his way to the bell, stopped, looking surprised. " Rosdael ? Do you mean where old M. des Charnières used to live ? "

" Used to live ! " repeated Horatia like a flash. " Why do you say ' used to live ' ? Does he not live there now ? "

" He died recently," replied the Marquis, drifting back almost unconsciously to his writing-table, the bell still unrung. " What an extraordinary thing ! " he continued with fresh interest, " that you should mention him, for I have just been buying some early botanical works from the sale of his library. They are somewhere here." He stooped to one of the many piles of books on the floor.

Horatia sank on the nearest chair, book-laden as it was.

" What do you mean, Emmanuel, by ' recently ' ? " she asked. " Last week—last month ? "

The Marquis raised himself, looking thoughtful and a little puzzled. " I think it was in August, when I was with you at Kerfontaine, though I did not hear of it till afterwards, and I was so sorry, because if I had known I might have gone over and bought——"

" Are you sure it was August ? " interrupted Horatia leaning forward.

"If you want to know the exact date," said Emmanuel beginning to hunt about afresh, "I think I can find you the sale catalogue of his books. He had a wonderful collection, mostly inherited. I remember having seen him once. He was a great miser; nothing would induce him to pay his night's lodging at a hotel, so he bought a house at every stage to Paris."

"Yes, I have heard that story before," said Horatia in a strange voice, which the Marquis was too busy to notice.

"Here it is," he said triumphantly. "You see, he died on August the 12th." And he handed her, over the writing-table, a thin ill-printed little pamphlet, the catalogue of the library of M. Adolphe des Charnières, chevalier de St. Louis, décédé le 12 Août 1831.

"I am sure those books of his are here somewhere," he said, seeing the fixity with which his sister-in-law was staring at the catalogue. "I think they would interest you if I could only find them." And he made another dive floorwards.

"Please do not trouble—another time . . ." came in a breathless voice from Horatia, and when Emmanuel turned, she had gone, taking the catalogue with her.

"Dear me," thought the Marquis, "I must tell her that it is no use trying to buy any books from that list; they were all sold, every one." And at last he rang for a light.

(3)

With the catalogue of M. des Charnières' books still clutched tightly in her hands, Horatia was standing perfectly still in the middle of the half-furnished

nursery. She did not know when Armand would return, nor how much more she would have of this sick agony. Why she had carried it to this place, where it seemed a thousand times more poignant, she did not know.

It was yesterday that she had sat here by the fire; yesterday that she had had a happy dream; yesterday that Armand, out of solicitude, had awakened her. On the table lay the pattern of the little cap for which she had been to get the lace; over the mantelpiece the Madonna gazed with absorbed, serene eyes at her Son. . . .

Armand's step at the door—already.

"They said you wanted to see me at once," said he, coming briskly in. "I was sure I should find you here. But—whatever is the matter?"

Horatia looked at his handsome, alert face, and did not hasten to answer. Then she said, "I know now why Madame de Vigerie and I are never to meet!"

"But you have always known it!" exclaimed her husband, with every sign of amazement, "Politics——"

She checked him. "Don't say it again—spare me that! Politics! And I have only to go into a milliner's to hear your 'politics' discussed!"

A demeanour of kindly calm descended on Armand. "My dear, you ought not to be standing. If you will only sit down we will go into this. I must insist." He pushed forward the big armchair from the fire, and, partly because she could indeed no longer stand, Horatia sank into it. "Now, tell me what you have been hearing in the milliner's?"

"What is the use," asked Horatia, "of being polite and considerate in private and humiliating me in public? I, your wife, have only to enter Herbault's

to hear the whole story of your connection with Madame de Vigerie, from its beginning in Brittany this summer, under my eyes—to hear how you go to see her every day, how . . . O, I don't know how I bore it ! " She buried her face in her shaking hands.

Armand bent over her. " For Heaven's sake don't agitate yourself so, Horatia ! Everybody is gossipped about in Paris, you must know that, surely ! I give you my word of honour that it is false. I did not think you were the sort of woman to listen to such things."

" Nor did I think—once—that you were the sort of man to do them."

" I have not," said he steadily. " Madame de Vigerie is of a reputation as unsullied as you yourself."

Horatia smiled very bitterly. " Do you usually leave her house as early as you did this afternoon ? "

" Not being in the habit of going there regularly, I have naturally no 'usual' hour for leaving," countered Armand.

" Ah, I forgot—you never go there now because of 'politics' ; it is too dangerous ! "

He was not to be caught so. " I did not say that I never went," he replied coolly. " I have been occasionally. Affairs demanded it. As a matter of fact I was there this afternoon."

" I knew that," said Horatia.

" I thought so," said her husband to himself. " May I ask how you knew it ? "

" After what those women said, I came to see."

The young man shrugged his shoulders. " In spite of all my adjurations and your promise ! Well, let us hope that nobody saw you ! "

Horatia gave a little gasp of anger. " And what of the people who have seen you going there ? "

" A man must take some risks," replied the Comte indifferently. " I knew that there was a certain amount of danger, but I did not expect that you, of all people, would be the person to denounce me."

His adroitness in constantly pushing her from her position was maddening. " O, if I were only a man ! " she broke out. " Do you really think that I am still the dupe, as I have been so long, of your pitiful ' politics ' ? It is all lies—lies everywhere ; they choke me—lies here, lies in Brittany——did that woman ever really have any letters from the Duchesse de Berry—were not all your interviews with her just a cloak ? Why, I could almost believe the Regent herself to be a lie, too—a lie incarnate, as you are ! "

" Horatia, for God's sake control yourself," said Armand, rather anxiously. " You do not know what you are saying, and this agitation is very bad for you."

" For the child, you mean ! How can you pretend to care for me—except that falsehood comes so easily to you ? She helps you, I suppose, that treacherous woman, to make up these plots for keeping me in the dark ? "

Armand stiffened. " Please do not speak of Madame de Vigerie like that ! You have no right—none whatever, on my soul."

Horatia laughed. " It is your duty to champion her. Which of you invented the story about your visit to Rosdael last August ? "

" Rosdael ? I do not know what you mean," said Armand ; but he looked uneasy.

" Is it possible that you have forgotten the interesting account you gave me of your visit to old M. des Charnières, and how he received you, that day when I thought I had seen you riding near St. Clair, and was fool enough to believe you when you said you had not

done so ? Whichever of you invented that tale to gull me with blundered badly, did they not, when they arranged for you a political interview with a man who had been dead for nearly a week ? You had better take this to your accomplice when next you ' run the risk ' of seeing her ! "

The young man mechanically took the catalogue which she held out to him, no doubt inwardly cursing the antiquarian tastes of his brother, and there was silence for a moment while he looked frowningly at its date.

" You cannot, I imagine," pursued Horatia, " say anything to that. It was a pity that you did not know that he was dead ; still, it was very unlikely that I should ever find out."

Armand lifted his head. " As a matter of fact," he said slowly, " I did know that M. des Charnières was dead. I will tell you exactly what happened. I started to ride to Rosdael, not knowing of his recent decease, when I had gone two or three miles I heard of it, and turned back. It was necessary, owing to this check to our plans, that I should see Madame de Vigerie at once. I told you the lie—for I admit that it was a lie . . . you will misunderstand me, I know—but as a precaution."

" Precaution ! " exclaimed Horatia. " Precaution against what ? "

Armand made a gesture. " Ma chère, against the very attitude which you are now taking up. It seems it was not unneeded."

There was a touch of faint derision and of triumph in his tone. How was it that he always got within her guard ? Horatia's head swam for a moment ; it was like a duel, in which she knew her skill inferior.

"No, I do not understand you. How could I ever need to be told a lie, for any reason?"

"Well, because—— Did Eulalie de Beaulieu, when she was at Kerfontaine, ever put any ideas into your head about Madame de Vigerie and me?"

"Certainly not," replied Horatia haughtily. "And for one thing I should not have listened to her."

"No, you only listen to unknown scandalmongers in milliners' shops, is it not?" riposted her husband like lightning. "It was against just such lying tongues as those to whom you apparently gave this easy credence that I was trying to protect Madame de Vigerie. But I was foolish in my choice of weapons. It was senseless of me to lie to you that day, and I sincerely ask your pardon."

Horatia looked very fixedly at him. "A lie cannot be so easily wiped out," she said. "You seem to hold them very lightly, so that I see you will think nothing of telling me others—have told them, doubtless, many, many times. Do not tell me another now, the greatest of all, for I shall not believe it."

Armand drew himself up, the pattern of slandered honour.

"I cannot accuse myself of what I have not done," he said with quiet dignity. "I admit that things look very black against me; but that is chiefly due to my own incredible folly, and if you were generous you would believe me when I swear to you, on the crucifix if you like—no, that is nothing to you—that there is not, and never has been, anything between me and Madame de Vigerie. If I cannot make you believe me I am sorry, for your sake as well as mine; but it is the truth, nevertheless."

"The truth," exclaimed Horatia, "when day after

day you have gone on deceiving me, pretending that you never saw the Vicomtesse, pretending that I must not see her—I do not know why you did that, since you seem to have less sense of shame than I thought—pretending that you were so concerned for my comfort . . ."

She stopped abruptly, very white, with dilated eyes and a hand at her heart.

"I begin to see," she said in a strangled voice. "You wanted an heir. After that it did not matter. O, how I loathe myself. . . ." And she began to sob, putting her hands wildly to her head. "Take the picture down . . . I don't want it there . . . take the child away . . ." She struggled to get up, but as Armand, greatly alarmed, bent over her to help her she shrank back, trying to keep him off, and crying, "Don't touch me, don't touch me! . . . I hate you! . . . I hate your child! I hate it, I hate it!"

Armand had the sense to dash to the bell and to pull it furiously.

Maurice-Victor-Stanislas-Etienne-Marie-Charles de la Roche-Guyon was born next day, at half past eleven in the morning.

CHAPTER XIII

(1)

Mrs. Martha Kemblet to her sister Mrs. Polly White, Paris, November 28th, 1831.

" My dear Polly,

" Hoping this finds you quite well as it leaves me at present. I have not had time these weeks so much as to send you a line, and now my head is all in a whirl, and you were always one to want to know things from the beginning. The precious babe is well, thank God, and in spite of all their Popish goings-on, which are enough to scare a Christian woman. Will you believe it, before that dear child was many hours old, with Miss Horatia at death's door as you may say, they brought in that Monsenior, as they call him, to christen him, and the beautiful christening robe as I put away myself with his dear mother looking on, not so much as two days before, all wasted. When his Reverence came over I did think it would be done again properly, but no ! A fine string of names he has, poor mite, but I will not try to write them. Master Maurice is enough for me, and it makes me wild to hear that Josephine speaking of Monsieur le Vicomte this and Monsieur le Vicomte that.

" But Josephine can't show off any of her airs now, for we are all put to the right about by this Madam Carry. Even the old Madam was ready to go down

on her knees to her, and as for the Count I think he would have given her a pound a minute. It was a pity to think that nice Mrs. Pole hadn't come already, but who was to know that Miss Horatia was going to take us all by surprise. Only the day before she was worrying her pretty head counting over all them English baby clothes, with me, she knowing nothing like, and she says to me, 'Martha, are you sure there is enough?' and I says, 'Saving your presence, more than enough for twins twice over.' And there they are, all lying just as we put them away, and the sweet infant all bundled up in French ones, like any heathen Indian. It's pitiful to see him.

"The next day after we did this Miss Horatia went out driving to buy some lace for a cap she had set her mind on, and I met her as she was coming in, and said, 'Have you got the lace you wanted, Mam?' and she says, looking strange, 'No, Martha,' and it seemed to me she had forgotten all about it. Then I went for a turn myself, and when I came in (it might be six o'clock or so) I found such a commotion as it might have been St. Giles' Fair, and all of them jibbering and jabbering so that I was put to it to know what had happened, but just then the old Madam's lady came screaming for me, and I ran upstairs to my poor lamb.

* * * * *

"It was sixteen hours before the babe was born; then for three days she was give over, and they sent a messenger to fetch his Reverence. I will say that they spared no expense, and that they took on terrible. As you know, the Count, for all his fair words, has never been a favourite of mine, but I tell you I was sorry for that young man. He was scared pretty nearly out of his

life at first, and then it seemed to me that the family looked pretty black at him, and it's my belief they had cause. That Jackanapes Jules, the Count's valet, told me for gospel that the Count and she were shut up for a long time in the nursery after she came in that afternoon, and it's thought they had words.

"Well, as I was saying, his Reverence arrived, and I took good care that things should be to his liking, because, for all that the house is full of duchesses and marquises as they call themselves, they don't know how to make a body comfortable as *I* call comfortable. The poor lamb seemed to cling to him like, but I don't know that she ever so much as asked to see the Count; so I drew my own conclusions.

"But that's five weeks ago now, and his Reverence went home again, as you know, and now, though the doctor says she may sit up on a couch a little every day it seems as if she couldn't make the effort. She just lies there, white as a lily, so that it's pitiful to see her, and do you know, what's worse, she won't take no notice of that pretty dear. And here all these months she's been wearing herself to death getting the nurseries ready as if he'd been a royal prince, and she, who never had a needle in her hand, sewing all day at his little clothes. The Lord knows best, I suppose, but it makes my heart ache."

(2)

The planets of larger bulk which revolved round Maurice-Victor-Stanislas-Etienne-Marie-Charles de la Roche-Guyon as their central sun were disturbed in their courses, for Toinette, the least of these luminaries, had just rushed into the nurseries to say that

M. le Comte was on his way thither. It was not the first time that this comet had impinged upon their orbits, but it was the first time that he had disturbed such a galaxy of subsidiary lights. Josephine, who had no business to be there at all, slipped out by a side door; Toinette, blushing deeply, paused but to make a reverence and followed her; but Martha, with merely the slightest sketch of a curtsey, folded her arms and remained placidly in the background. The buxom Breton nurse, rising majestically from her chair (the great consequence of the burden in her arms warranting her in refraining from any movement of respect) waited, as Armand approached, with the air of a smiling priestess.

The centre of the solar system was looking that morning more than usually careworn. He was not asleep; on the contrary some knotty problem of existence or pre-existence was engaging his whole mind. His worried expression, however, slightly relaxed as his father bent to look at him, and his puckered face broke into a different series of puckers.

"Aha! he recognises M. le Comte!" said the Breton delightedly. "He smiles at M. son père!" (This was a very free rendering of Maurice's facial transformation.) "Let M. le Comte give him his finger, and he will see how strong he is."

The clutch of the tiny hand round Armand's forefinger seemed to please him, for he said, "Tiens, Maurice, do not damage me for life!"

"He resembles M. son père astonishingly," pursued Madame Carré. "Probably his hair will be the hair of Madame la Comtesse, but who could doubt that his eyes are those of M. le Comte?"

The eyes in question, which were indeed more blue than grey, were now staring up unwinkingly and rather disconcertingly at the young man.

"Dost thou recognise me, Maurice?" asked Armand. "Thou art thyself unlike anyone or anything that I have ever seen. Is it possible that I am reminded of a monkey?"

"M. le Comte would not wish to hold him?" suggested the nurse.

"Si," answered Armand. "Give him to me. He will not break, hein?"

He had the gift of doing everything deftly, and he held his son in a manner to call forth praises from the guardian. Maurice still studied him, and was carried over to Martha at the window.

"Well, my good Martha," said Armand, "what do you think of him?"

"He takes to you, Sir," responded Mrs. Kemblet weightily. (Never, though she sometimes accorded her "lamb" a title, did she address the source of that title otherwise.) "And there's no doubt he has your eyes."

"He has need to take to someone, has he not?" observed Armand.

And though it had given Martha "a turn" to see the poor innocent in his father's arms when he had never been in his mother's, she rose in defence, knowing the Breton ignorant of English.

"She'll be all right, Sir, my lady will, when she's stronger, you'll see, and be as fond of him as never was, she as wanted him so badly. . . . Will he go back to his Nana now, the precious?"

"Martha," said the Comte, surrendering his offspring, "never buy your bonnets at Herbault's. But you don't, I suppose."

"Certainly not, Sir," responded Mrs. Kemblet in some indignation. "I makes them myself, Sir, not liking the French style, saving your presence. . . . Here he is, Mrs. Carry."

And, able then to ponder Armand's cryptic utterance, she stood staring after him as he left the nursery, and thought, "Poor young gentleman, it's pitiful! Well, wild oats, as the saying is, always come home to roost." Nevertheless, from that day she had softer thoughts of "the Count."

(3)

All these agitations had, as may well be imagined, reverberated nowhere more loudly than in the apartments of Victorine, Duchesse Douairière de la Roche-Guyon. During the crisis she had performed the customary miracle known as "rising to the occasion"; to her had come the terrified Armand, the distressed Emmanuel, and from the top of the house she had directed, as from a quarter-deck, the various manœuvres which were to guide the family ship once more into smooth water. Now, a veteran admiral, she a little took her ease, though not relaxing her vigilance, for, to change the metaphor, there was something savouring of a mutiny below decks, and the mutineer was the English wife.

The Dowager had been far too much occupied of late to pay attention to that curious soul of hers, which seemed to crave for ghostly nourishment only when her body had received too much of material, and Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon, paying a call upon her this December morning, had not found her desirous of spiritual intercourse. He sat there now by her bedside, his

fingers tapping gently on the box of Limoges enamel which enshrined her false teeth—but this he did not know—his thin, refined prelate's face a little flushed from the heat of the room after the cold outside, while the Marquis, leaning rather gloomily against the mantelpiece listened, like his cousin, to the venerable lady's denunciation of her favourite grandson.

"Not," said the Duchesse, with a fine liberality of view, "that I pronounce judgment upon his affair with Madame de Vigerie—that is more in your province, Prosper—but that I cannot conceive his not taking sufficient precautions to prevent the slightest whisper of it coming to Horatia's ears at this time. All Englishwomen are prudes, and he ought to have known what the effect would be. Heaven knows we do not want another secluded wife in the family . . . No, Emmanuel, you know I do not blame you in the least . . . That she will scarcely speak to Armand is natural, but it is not natural that she should refuse to take the slightest interest in the child. (Prosper, do leave off tapping your fingers like that!) As you know, it was never my wish that she should nurse it, but though events have made that impossible, I should at least desire——Ah, here is Armand himself. Good-morning, grandson!"

"Good-morning, bonne maman," said the young man, saluting her extended claw. "Good-morning, Prosper. I suppose you are sitting on my case as usual?"

"Do not be flippant, Armand," said the Duchesse with majesty. "You ought to be on your knees thanking the saints that the child is as healthy as it is, and that your wife is not in her grave."

Armand sat down with an air of resignation, and looked across the bed at Prosper.

"If you could make some novel contribution to the joint sermon, cousin," he said pleasantly, "I should be grateful. The old text is getting threadbare."

"I don't want to preach you a sermon, my dear Armand," replied the priest. "I think recent events must have done that."

"I will tell you what recent events have done for me," retorted the young man with vigour. "They have shown me the truth of the English saying, 'as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.' You drive me, between you, to wish heartily that I were what you say I am, the lover of the lady to whom you assign me. I should be no worse off—in fact considerably better."

"*Armand!*" protested his grandmother, with prudery so manifestly histrionic that even Prosper turned away to hide a smile.

(4)

"Is he a precious pet, then, and will he come to his Martha, and would he like to go to his pretty Mamma?" crooned Martha, rocking a bundle to and fro in her arms. Maurice, just extricated from the voluminous embrace of his foster-mother, gurgled assent.

"Has he had a nice walk then, and did he have a beautiful sleepy sleep?" continued his faithful admirer, hurrying along the corridor in the direction of her mistress's bedroom. Arrived there she stopped, listened, and knocked.

It was the hour for Horatia to be sitting up in an armchair. She did this religiously, according to the doctor's orders, from three to four, then wearily allowed herself to be put to bed again. Now she could receive a few visitors. Members of the family, and

connections, came to offer their congratulations, but the conversation was extremely one-sided, and Martha would not permit her charge even to say "Yes" and "No" for longer than ten minutes at a time. Even the Duchesse, when she paid her state visit, found herself, to her indignation, back again in her own apartments almost as soon as she had left them, and so there was nothing to do but to send the small parcel containing the promised emeralds to Horatia, since she had not had time to make the presentation in person.

It was a good thing, perhaps, that a kind Providence had prevented this, for her granddaughter-in-law, just glancing at the jewels, told Martha to put them away and never to let her see them again. She had cried after the episode, and for a week no further visits had been allowed. Every day Armand came to kiss her hand. His appearance seemed to make no difference one way or the other. Horatia would say, in answer to his enquiries, "I am quite well, thank you," and turn her head, so that there was nothing left for him to do but to go away. Her son she had scarcely seen, and her indifference amounted to a positive distaste for his society.

Once or twice after his morning promenade the fat, jolly Breton woman, to whom Maurice owed the preservation of his tiny life, was invited to exhibit her charge, but Horatia refused so much as to look at him, and merely said, "Please ask that woman to go away. I cannot bear her great cap." Martha regretfully obeyed, and by evening was ready to agree to the exclusion of the child altogether, when she saw how her mistress's temperature had risen. That was three weeks earlier, and although Horatia's bitterness and apathy continued the doctors had given it as their opinion that there was a steady if slow improvement.

They were agreed that it would be a great step in the right direction if Madame la Comtesse could be induced to take some interest in her baby. Martha had asked and received permission to try again, and she now stood with Maurice in her arms summoning up courage to enter. A fresh gurgle gave the necessary impetus; she turned the handle of the door and went in.

Horatia, as white as her dressing-gown, was sitting with her back to the door, looking into the fire, her hands folded before her.

"Would he like to go to his pretty mamma? and he shall then," said Martha, laying down the bundle in Horatia's lap. Horatia started, but with the child already on her knee it was impossible to resist.

"Now, Miss Horatia, just put your hand under his little head and hold him a moment for me while I poke the fire. He wouldn't cry, no, he wouldn't, Mother's poppet," she went on, as the infant showed signs of weeping.

Horatia put her hand under his head as she was told, and awkwardly tried to make a lap for the tiny creature, who decided at last that his puckerings should end in a smile. The fire needed a great deal of making up, and as soon as Mrs. Kemblet had finished she found that there were handkerchiefs which that careless Josephine had not yet put away. Horatia appeared afraid to move, while Maurice clutched wildly at his own thumbs, and seemed for the moment content with his rapid change of quarters.

"Martha," came at last the languid voice, "do you think he is my baby at all?"

"Why, Miss Horatia, how can you talk so! Whose else should he be, and his forehead like his Reverence's own? Pick him up and cuddle him, my lady; he might

be a poor orphan, not so much as seeing his own mother."

But Maurice at this point, probably feeling himself an orphan, began to cry. In an instant the wily Martha had slipped out of the room, and closed the door behind her.

"My heart was thumping fit to burst," she afterwards wrote to Polly. "But the precious did not cry for long." And indeed, when, a quarter of an hour later, she cautiously opened the door, Horatia was bending over the child in her lap. She half turned, and raised a warning finger. Maurice was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIV

(I)

It was New Year's Day, 1832, and the Duchesse was doing up a small packet. She believed absolutely in a system of rewards and punishments, and she thought that when people had done what was right they should be suitably recompensed. This, therefore, was a present of five hundred francs for Martha.

The doctor called in to attend an attack which the Dowager now permitted herself had given it as his opinion that the family of La Roche-Guyon had to thank the English attendant for the recovery of Madame la Comtesse. It was three weeks now since Martha's fortunate experiment, and a marked change had taken place in its subject. Horatia was beginning to be about again as usual. She drove out daily, and was receiving visitors. She had entirely dropped her peculiar attitude towards the child, and was behaving like a reasonable being, far more reasonably, indeed, than the Duchesse could have expected. To the Dowager her unnatural dislike of her son had been no more objectionable than her absorption before his birth, her extravagant preparations for his advent, her intention of having an English nurse for him. Providence, however, had defeated the latter project, and had caused that treasure Madame Carré to be installed. And the latitude which Armand had allowed to Horatia's fancies for redecoration and upholstery of

the nurseries the Dowager had put down to his shrewdness, for which she had a considerable respect. No doubt the young scamp was glad to see his wife so harmlessly occupied, so long as he had his own freedom. It was true that the consequences of his indulgence in that freedom had been rather disastrous, but, though the Duchesse could not be got to believe his protestations of innocence, she no longer treated him to homilies on the subject, considering that the conditions of his ménage were improving. For not only did Horatia, though she visited the nursery daily, refrain from disturbing the régime established by the Duchesse herself, but she had consented to appear publicly with Armand next week, so, evidently, the breach was healed. Could anything be more satisfactory?

The old lady finished sealing up the packet for Martha. It then occurred to her to reward the Blessed Virgin also, and she wrote an order on her bank for one of Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon's charities.

(2)

In reality the domestic affairs of the Comte and Comtesse were not prospering as the dispenser of rewards upstairs believed. At the very moment when the Duchesse was indulging in these reflections, Horatia was on the point of doing something she had long intended to do.

Armand had just come into her boudoir with his arms full of flowers.

"I have brought you some lilac," he said, laying down a sheaf of white blossoms, and with them, almost furtively, a leather case which, from its shape, contained a necklace. "Here are some roses, too. I

thought you might like them as a New Year's gift for Maurice. It is his first New Year's Day."

"You are very kind," replied his wife evenly. "If you will ring for Joséphine I will tell her to put them in the nursery."

Armand walked across the room in silence to the bell. Then he moved away without ringing it, murmuring something about taking the flowers to Maurice himself.

"Armand," said his wife, looking at the unopened case, "I think I would rather that you did not give me presents. I am afraid that you do not understand."

"Understand what?" asked the young man uneasily. "I understand, my dear, that you are getting better at last, and that you are more beautiful than ever."

Horatia motioned him back. "I am afraid that is not true," she said in a very matter-of-fact way. "Will you sit down? I have been waiting to be strong enough to have a talk with you."

Armand did not sit down. "I see that you have not forgiven me for my ever-to-be-regretted deception," he said, regarding her with some apprehension.

"I do not think that there is much question of forgiving, or of not forgiving," replied Horatia. "I really do not mind if you deceive me or no; I am past that now. Since my illness something has happened to me —I am different. I believe that the last thing I said before I fainted was that I hated you. I take that back; it is not true. One cannot hate a . . . a person who does not exist . . . I would rather you understood."

"Merci, mon amie, you make yourself perfectly plain," said Armand with a rather forced lightness. He had broken off a stem of the lilac and holding it in his hand, was gazing at it. "But I assure you that I do not regard myself as a ghost, ma foi, not in the least!"

Suddenly he looked up and met her glance full. " Then you still do not believe me ? "

" I cannot. I am sorry," said his wife in a low voice, and, leaning back in her chair, she closed her eyes. She was no longer, as before, a duellist needing to see what parry her antagonist would next use ; she was a judge, pronouncing sentence. Armand said something under his breath, breaking up the lilac stem.

But in a moment Horatia reopened her eyes and sat up. " I have been so humiliated already," she resumed, " that I cannot bear any more. Must I make myself more explicit ? Take your freedom ; do what you like with it. I shall ask no questions."

" You are proposing, then, to make a scandal," returned her husband, lifting angry eyes. " That will not do much to silence the other gossip, which you found so objectionable, will it ? "

" That story does not touch me now," said Horatia. " And there shall be no scandal, I promise you that. In public I shall be your wife. I will do my duty by your child. When we have to appear together I do not think you will have any cause to complain of me."

Armand suddenly flung the tortured branch of lilac into the fire. " For the last time, Horatia, will you believe me ? " he said with passion. " I have given you my word of honour ; do you expect me to beg your forgiveness for a fault which I have not committed ? I have been patient, for you have been very ill—you are ill now, or you would not create this causeless and ridiculous situation."

" O, do not delude yourself with that idea," returned his wife. " I am quite well now, and I know what I am saying, and I mean it. I have not been near death without learning many things. I am sorry if the

situation seems to you ridiculous; to me it is more than that. I do not want you to speak any more about forgiveness. I can never believe you, and that is the end of the matter."

Armand was whiter even than she. But the armour of weakness and weariness which, unrealising, she wore, was potent. He controlled himself with obvious difficulty.

"That is your last word, Horatia?"

"Yes, I think so," said she wearily. "Would you mind going now, and telling Martha to come to me."

"Soit!" said the Comte between his teeth, and walked to the door.

"There is one thing more," said the tired, even voice. "Would you be so good as to explain matters to Madame de Vigerie. She has called twice to see me. Naturally I shall not receive her, and I have not yet learned how to lie."

It is enormously to Armand's credit that he did not bang the door.

(3)

As soon as her husband's footsteps had died away Horatia got up rather unsteadily from her chair and turned the key in the lock. Somehow or other victory had intensified rather than relieved the misery of life. She had got what she wanted, and she was frightened at her own success. She was not accustomed to compromise with her conscience, and she had an uneasy feeling that she was not acting quite rightly—and yet how otherwise could she go on living in the same house with Armand? He ought to be thankful that she had not insisted on returning to her father. Now, of course, he would go at once to that woman!

It was curious that her jealous hate should still be mixed with pain, and that the treachery of her friend should still have power to wound her, when greater things than friendship were at stake, but she had been very near loving the Vicomtesse, and she had trusted her from the first time that she had seen her. For no other woman before had she ever had quite the same feeling. . . . Well, it only proved that even liars could sometimes speak the truth, for Armand had said over and over again that no woman could be true to another. So that was the last of her illusions. There was nothing left to live for, and every day she was getting stronger.

A door opened and shut at the end of the corridor, but in the short interval there came the cry of an infant. Horatia sat up intent and listening—half rose, and leant back again. She was determined not to yield to the absurd weakness of being unable to sit still and hear Maurice cry. There were plenty of people to quiet him, and besides, in such a world he might as well get used to crying . . . It was no good. She got up, unlocked her door, and listened. The sound had ceased.

Horatia was very far now from feeling any kind of repulsion for the baby. All the strange obsession of her illness had vanished that afternoon when Martha had had the temerity to leave him on her lap. The living warmth of his tiny body had unsealed the frozen spring of tenderness, and for that reason it was very seldom that she allowed herself to take him in her arms. He was Armand's son, and she was determined not to forget it—Armand's, who had deceived her and lied to her from the beginning. With the shock of her husband's treachery, the realisation that the unborn child was his, as well as hers, had seemed to burn itself into

her consciousness. It had wrung from her the cry, " I hate you, I hate your child ! " She did not hate Armand now, for, as she had told him, he was dead to her, and she did not hate Maurice, but he was not the child of her dreams. He was Armand's son, a stranger and a foreigner, a captive already to the family tradition. He would grow up French in nurture, French in thought ; he would grow up like his father. And this was the child who was to have been welcomed into a world wholly English, prepared for him by his mother. She could hardly bear to enter the nursery now, to hear French spoken, where only English was to have been, and to know that the press against the wall remained closed, because his nurses could not or would not dress him in the English babyclothes laid there lovingly so short a time before. The beautiful copy of the Raphael Madonna was all that remained to remind her of a child and his mother, and a nursery that might have been.

(4)

The reason for the abrupt cessation of Armand's visits at the end of October was not known to Madame de Vigerie for some days. Then she had a note from him telling her the news, but without any hint of what had occasioned the premature arrival of his heir. The Vicomtesse was greatly perturbed on Horatia's account (though understanding that she was now out of danger), and she went herself to the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon to inquire, and sent her flowers, more than once or twice, having no suspicion how those flowers would have been received had Armand allowed them to reach his wife's sick-room. When Madame de Vigerie heard that Horatia was well enough to receive an intimate

friend for a few minutes she called again, fully expecting to be admitted, since she was well aware that she herself was the only friend with the slightest claim to real intimacy with the English girl. Much to her disappointment a message was brought that Madame la Comtesse was too tired to see her that day. There was, however, no hope expressed that she would call again, and Laurence de Vigerie drove away feeling rather dashed.

Possibly, she told herself, Horatia was shocked at her temerity in venturing to the house in spite of Armand's prohibition. As a matter of fact the Vicomtesse considered that she had disposed of that prohibition, about the necessity of which she had more than once had doubts. She was sure now, from what she had heard, that the reason for the secrecy of Armand's visits had gone—but with its vanishing had ceased the visits, too. For nine weeks she neither saw him nor heard from him. And it was during those weeks that she learnt to miss him more and more intensely, to hope that each succeeding winter's day might bring him, as of old.

The winter's day which brought him, at length, was the second of the New Year. Paris was ringing with the festivities of the season, and Madame de Vigerie's salon was full of gifts and flowers. Into this warm, lamplit, scented atmosphere, when her other visitors had departed, came at last Armand de la Roche-Guyon, pale, almost grim, and empty-handed.

Laurence de Vigerie's heart moved in her breast to meet him, and she made no attempt to disguise that she was glad.

"My dear friend," she exclaimed, giving him both her hands, "where have you been these years—these centuries? And how is Horatia?"

"She is better, thank you," replied Armand in a curious tone, as he lifted her hands to his lips. "And I . . . O, I have been playing the devoted husband . . . to very small purpose."

After so explicit an avowal the extraction of the whole story was not difficult. Laurence de Vigerie sat motionless while, pacing restlessly to and fro, the young man unfolded it to her. All his bitterly hurt self-esteem was in the tale.

"I have lied to Horatia and I have lied to you," he ended. "You see what wreckage I have made. I have alienated my wife for ever; I have involved you in a scandal. It seems to me that there is nothing left but to blow my brains out, or to slip into the Seine."

"I think Horatia should have believed you," said Madame de Vigerie in rather a hard voice.

"I had lied too much," answered Armand, and there was silence. A petal from a hothouse flower fell on the shining table at the Vicomtesse's elbow. She took it up and began to twist it in her fingers. At the other side of the room, Armand sat on a couch with his head in his hands.

"If I had been seeing her as I used to do it could never have happened. Why did you make up that story to keep us apart?"

The young man gave a sound like a groan. "Must you know the real reason?"

"If I am ever to forgive you."

"It was because I wanted you so madly, and because I saw that I had no chance while you were her friend. You were too honourable. It was a base trick . . . but I would have stooped to anything . . . I suppose you will never have anything to do with me again, and I have nothing but my own cursed folly to thank for it.

If I had not been blinded I should have seen long ago that you were the only woman in the universe for me—Laurence, Laurence, you could have made something of me . . . and I have deceived you, and damaged your reputation. I will say good-bye, I think, before you send me away." He got up. Madame de Vigerie had buried her face in her hands.

" Good-bye," he repeated. " Do not fear that I am going to shoot myself. I am not worth such an heroic ending." He laughed unsteadily. " Will you not even say good-bye, Laurence ? "

Never, in all his hours of gaiety and success had Armand de la Roche-Guyon so appealed to Laurence de Vigerie as now. He *had* made wreckage, and he would be the first to suffer. She saw him swept to the feet of the worthless.

" O, I must save you ! " she cried, more to herself than to him. " Armand, my poor Armand, I do not cast off my friends like that . . ." She held out her hands, her eyes full of tears.

CHAPTER XV

(1)

ENSCONCED on the Tuscan slope of the Apennines, on the road from Bologna to Florence, stood an inn, frequented by travellers less for its comforts than for its convenient situation, and here, under a pergola, on a warm September morning of 1831, Tristram and Dormer were seated. The road, visible from their present position, clung desperately to the side of the mountain; down below was a torrent, faintly clamouring, and opposite rose another mountain wall, green and thickly wooded. At this wall Charles Dormer was now absently gazing, thinking of the spot, further back, from which they had seen, vast and indistinct, the plain of Lombardy, and beyond it, just visible above the horizon like a flock of small clouds, the summits of the Alps. For it was out of the Alps, after all, that they had come to see Florence.

The voyage had done him good, but as soon as they landed and he had begun to sightsee, his headaches came back again. Then he would abstain for a little—and try once more. Matters came at last to a climax in April, at Rome, and very unwillingly indeed he had obeyed the English doctor whom Tristram called in, and gone up to Switzerland for the summer. The air of the mountains and the quiet had worked something of a miracle, and so, having promised themselves, during their exile, that they would still fulfil their intention of seeing Florence, they had recrossed the Alps, proposing,

after seeing that city, to take ship at Leghorn. But this morning Dormer, to whom this plan was chiefly due, being in the mood when one can survey oneself with a rather cynical amusement, was quite conscious that he was not now so burningly anxious to see Florence as he had been, for he was beginning to chafe to get back to Oxford. The long letter in his hand had not lessened that anxiety.

He looked across the table at Tristram, who was reading an old English newspaper. If he himself had gained physical health from his travels Tristram had equally come to a measure of spiritual. Dormer knew now that what he had hoped was the true explanation of Tristram's perplexity was indeed true, and that Tristram no longer felt a barrier between himself and the priesthood ; in fact he was going to be ordained at Christmas.

" In how many weeks shall we be home again, did you say ? " he asked suddenly.

Tristram raised a bronzed face from his newspaper. " In about six, I reckon. Why ? Is anything the matter?"

" Oh, no," returned his friend. " I was only wondering if we could just get an idea of Florence in two or three days and then go on to Leghorn."

" But you have been wanting all the summer to be in Florence," said Tristram, laying down his paper.

" Yes, I know, but . . . "

" What has Newman been writing to you ? " asked Tristram suspiciously.

" An enthusiastic account of the woods of Dart. He has been staying with Froude, you know."

" We have seen better things than the Dart—or even the Axe—for that matter," observed Tristram. " Anything else ? "

Dormer turned over the pages of his letter. "He sends me a tirade against Liberalism and the anti-dogmatic principle, which makes me long to be home. He says the Bill is bound to pass and the nation is for revolution."

"Well, I suppose we knew that," returned Tristram, unimpressed. "How is he getting on with the Councils?"

"Very well, I think. I told you, Tristram, that he was the right man."

"Oh, I dare say he is good enough," was the grudging reply.

"Listen to this," said Dormer. "'My work opens a grand and most interesting field to me, but how I shall ever be able to make one assertion, much less to write one page, I cannot tell.' That will be all right."

No response from Tristram. Dormer smiled to himself and, seeing the mood he was in, omitted the rest of the page where Newman confided to him his fear that he should be obliged to confine himself to the one Council dealing with the Arian heresy.

"Here is something about you. 'It seems very unlikely that Froude will be able to join Mozley at St. Ebbe's. His father and Keble are both against it, and he himself wants to try his hand first at the Ecclesiastical history of the Middle Ages. What a pity it is not a year later, when I suppose Hungerford would have been in priest's orders. It would have been just the thing for him. Remember, anyhow, that Oxford is the proper sphere for him and do not let him escape elsewhere. If, as you say, he must have work amongst the poor, Keble agrees with me that something must be found for him near at hand. The times are troublous, and Oxford will want hot-headed men.'"

"I am much obliged to Newman. No one has ever called me hot-headed before."

"Oh, you know what he means," said Dormer.

"Anyhow, I can't see what good he thinks I am going to be to him. But for the next few years I don't mind very much what I do. Eventually, of course, I should like my parish to be a poor one, and as I shall never marry I shall be able to live in it, however squalid it may be."

"I quite agree," said Dormer conciliatingly, "that you are made for that sort of thing, but for the time being, perhaps . . ."

"These poor, ignorant, dirty priests are at least one with their people," pursued Tristram unregarding, his eyes fixed on the road below them. "I expect the mere fact of their being quite alone makes them more accessible. Yes, there is a great deal, Charles, from the practical standpoint, in your celibate views. I wish the accompaniments of that state were not sometimes so ugly. I should have expected anyone as fastidious as you to be the first to see that side of it. Look there!" And he pointed to a snuffy, cassocked form toiling up the slope. "If he had had a wife his clothes might have been mended, and perhaps he might even have washed his face sometimes."

"If you come to think of it," said Dormer in a matter-of-fact tone, "the accompaniments of a martyrdom could never have been anything but ugly."

"My dear fellow," retorted Tristram, smiling, "I think I have heard you in that vein before. You are an idealist, and no doubt it's very comforting. I have the misfortune to be unable to get away from facts. Read about this boat race between Oxford and London amateurs which took place in June. I must

go and pack if we are to reach Florence to-night."

He threw Dormer the paper, stooped to pat the flea-ridden puppy of the hotel, and went in.

(2)

And they might have reached Florence that night if it had not been for Giulia Barlozzi.

To the human eye Giulia Barlozzi, sitting by the roadside to beg, appeared little but a bundle of rags. To the equine perception she was evidently something much more portentous, and the horses testified their aversion in a very effective way. The postilion basely if prudently contrived to slip off before the pace became impossible, and the masterless animals tore unchecked down the steep Apennine road, the open carriage swaying and banging behind them. The crash came at the bottom, where, to make matters really final, there was a sharp turn and a stone bridge. Tristram was flung clear, landing, slightly stunned, not six inches from the parapet. When he picked himself up, half stupefied, peasants, miraculously sprung from nowhere, had seized the horses and were dragging Dormer, apparently dead, from beneath the shattered carriage.

Frenzied with apprehension, Tristram struggled across the road, but before he got to his friend a curtain seemed to come down over his vision. He heard excited, encouraging voices in his ears, arms supported him, and, half carried, half led, he found himself, after an uncertain interval, seated in a room with someone bathing his head. Around him was a babel more awful than he had ever imagined could proceed from the human tongue, lamentations, explanations, curses, cries and prayers. And on a table in the middle

of the room, white, dusty, and bleeding a little from a cut on the temple, lay Dormer, very still.

"Charles!" cried Tristram in a voice of anguish, springing to his feet. Instantly the torrent of talk was turned on to him.

"Non è morto! non è morto!" he was volubly assured a score of times before he had satisfied himself that it was true. A pæan of inward thanksgiving burst from him when he ascertained that Dormer, though unconscious, was certainly breathing. Voices of commiseration and intense sympathy surged round him as he bent over his friend, voices appreciative of Dormer's appearance—"he has a face like San Giovanni himself"—voices informing him that the priest had been sent for——

"A priest!" cried Tristram in his stumbling Italian. "It is a doctor that is wanted!" But when he tried to explain that he and his friend did not belong to their Church, a dirty hand waved before his eyes a missal which Dormer had bought at Bologna, and which had been jerked out of his pocket in the catastrophe, and he was assured that his friend was a Christian, and that the parroco was coming as fast as he could. However, when Tristram gathered that the medical skill of this ecclesiastic—which was represented as being very great—was all that he was likely to obtain that day, there being no doctor within many miles, he was prepared to welcome him more warmly, especially as just at that juncture he had made the unpleasant discovery that Dormer's right leg was certainly broken.

The parroco had not arrived, and discussion was still raging round the table and its burden when Dormer came back to consciousness. Tristram, who was wetting his lips with brandy at the time, stopped as he saw his

friend's eyes open, and said, in no very steady voice, "Thank God! . . . Charles, my dear fellow, I am afraid your leg is broken. But I thought . . . O, thank God it is no worse."

Dormer lay quiet a moment, his head on Tristram's arm. "This . . . reminds me . . . of Eton," he said at last, faintly. And, sick with pain, he added, very characteristically, "It is entirely my own fault . . . for insisting on returning . . . to Florence."

CHAPTER XVI

(I)

That Tristram Hungerford, nearly four months later, should still be in Italy, should, indeed, be walking up and down the Cascine at Florence, among other promenaders, on a fine day in January, was due to the fact that an obscure Italian parroco had received from art a shadowy acquaintance with medicine and from nature, unbounded confidence wherewith to make use of it.

Never again was Tristram likely to allow a physician of souls to try his hand at mending a body, least of all the body of a friend. Priestly surgery, as it had been practised on Dormer, he would henceforth eschew like the plague. For the result of the parroco's ministrations had been disastrous, and his setting of the broken leg so bungling that at last Tristram had Dormer removed to Florence and procured the services of a first-class surgeon. The latter pulled a long face, and said that if the English signor did not want to walk lame all his days the leg must be re-set. At the stage then reached this involved breaking the bone again. It is probable that Tristram, sitting in the next room with his hands over his ears, suffered quite as much as the victim himself. The surgeon indeed told him afterwards that, had not his friend been a heretic, he might have thought he had been miraculously relieved, as were sometimes the holy martyrs. Not, however, that when he saw Dormer afterwards, Tristram could discern much evidence of alleviation of any kind.

However, in a week or ten days now they were going home. Dormer's accident had not, at any rate, brought back his headaches ; he affirmed, on the contrary, that the long, enforced rest had done just what he needed. He had borne the pain and tedium serenely, almost lightly ; the only thing that seemed to try him was his absence from Oxford, and the fact that his misfortune had delayed his friend's ordination. Their prolonged stay had brought them several acquaintances among the English colony at Florence, and of late they had come to know an Italian gentleman connected with the Court, a certain Signor della Torre Vecchia, who had become smitten with an immense admiration for Dormer. Tristram had indeed rather suffered from this worship, and so, though the Italian had been exceedingly kind to them both, putting a carriage at their disposal and doing his utmost to carry off Dormer from their hotel to his villa at Fiesole, Tristram was not altogether sorry that their benefactor was leaving Florence that very afternoon. For when Signor della Torre Vecchia could get Tristram alone he did nothing but talk about his dilettissimo amico, his charm, his looks ("one would say a portrait by Van Dyck, signore"), his intellectual distinction. He drove Tristram into promising him Dormer's book on the Non-Jurors, for he had been in England and manifested a most inexplicable interest in the English Church, though, despite their endeavours to prove to him that she was a part of the Church Catholic—instancing the Catholicity of her Prayer-Book, while admitting the Protestantism of her practice—he persisted in regarding her as a phenomenon, and they never got any further. Afterwards he would take Tristram aside and reiterate his conviction that nobody like Dormer could possibly

remain permanently outside the True Church. The only consolation which Tristram derived from these confidences was the power of chaffing Dormer unmercifully on the effect produced by his "romantic appearance."

Towards Horatia Tristram's feelings had changed. He would always, he supposed, love her better than anyone else in the world, but he did not love her now as a lover. Besides the fierce struggle of the past months to tear from his heart what he regarded as sin, a struggle which had slowly been successful, there was the knowledge, conveyed to him by the Rector, that she was about to have a child. Unconsciously this made a difference to him. He felt now as he imagined an elder brother might feel towards a sister who had always been very dear to him, full of an affection essentially protective. The time had been that, even though the sense of sin had left him, he could not receive a letter from her without being plunged in depression. But now he would have been very glad of a letter, for, whether they were lost or delayed in the notoriously uncertain Italian posts, or whether they were non-existent, no communications from the Rector or from Horatia had reached him since August, and he sometimes imagined horrible things, as that Horatia was dead, for he did not know when her child was expected.

Another change, too, had gradually wrought in his spirit. He was, in a sense, quite honest when he mocked at Dormer's idealisation of the single life, though perhaps his mockery was due to the knowledge that the ideas which he derided were not really so very alien to his mind.

Now, indeed, if the truth were known, they had even

begun to have a curious attraction for him—a speculative attraction. What if to some souls there did really come a call to win " that little coronet or special reward which God hath prepared (extraordinary and beside the great Crown of all faithful souls) " as the author of *Holy Living* had it, for those who had made the sacrifice of earthly affection and ties. And persons *did* make that sacrifice, in numbers—as witness the not very attractive religious whom he saw about the streets of Florence. Most of all, unforgettable, recurring again and again to his mind, there was the great fresco in the monastery of San Marco, where S. Dominic, kneeling at the foot of the Cross, embraces it in a passion of love and pain, and the Crucified looks down at him. It had taken Tristram's breath away when first he saw it at the end of the cloister. After some time he went and looked at it again—and came away very sad. Its message was not for him, whose obedience was loveless. All that the picture's spiritual beauty could do for him now was to remind him painfully of Keble's words, so applicable to himself, of the shame of the thought—

" That souls in refuge, holding by the cross
Should wince and fret at this world's little loss."

Yes, to walk among the lilies might be given to such an one as Dormer, but not to a commonplace person like himself, who had been forced into sacrifice. He had nothing to give of his own free-will. That he would henceforth live without earthly ties was not because he had been smitten by a vision from on high, but because the woman he loved had been taken from him. It was enough for him if he could echo the close of those same lines—

" Wash me, and dry these bitter tears,
O let my heart nó further roam,
'Tis Thine by vows and hopes and fears
Long since——"

Some way off a stir among the promenaders and the sight of the Ducal livery, portending, probably, that the Grand Duke was taking the air, reminded Tristram of Torre Vecchia, and his impending departure. Pulling out his watch, he hurried off.

As he entered the hotel he was stopped by the porter.

" The post is in, Excellency, and there are two English letters for you."

The letters were both addressed in Mr. Grenville's handwriting, and one had been posted no less than three months before.

(2)

Dormer crumpled up the paper on which he had been scribbling and pushed it under his cushions, where he lay on a couch near a window looking out on to the Arno. The translation which he had been making of a portion of Andrewes' *Preces Privatae* did not please his difficult taste, and he took up instead the other book lying beside him—Serenus Cressy's edition of Father Augustine Baker's *Sancta Sophia, or Directions for the Prayer of Contemplation*, a relic of one of his Jacobite ancestors who had afterwards become a Benedictine, which he had found, at his mother's death, among her books. He glanced at the title page, where the hand which more than a hundred years ago had written its owner's name —and his—Carolus Dormer—had traced below a cross and the family motto, 'Ciò che Dio vuole, io voglio—

God's Will my will' ; and began to read the chapter "Of the Great Desolation." Perhaps because he lived almost always in the conscious presence of God the description of "this most sharp purgatory of love" had for him a curious fascination.

"For what has a soul left to fear that can with a peaceable mind support, yea, and make her benefit of the absence of God Himself."

He closed the book and lay back, gazing out of the window, yet San Miniato and its cypresses were nothing but a blur. . . .

The door opened, and the landlord admitted a tall, fair Italian, wrapped in an ample cloak.

"Do not rise, do not rise, my dear friend, I implore you!" exclaimed the visitor, swooping down upon Dormer and seizing both his hands. "And how do you find yourself this afternoon? Not in pain, I trust!"

"But I am perfectly well," protested Dormer, laughing. Accustomed as he was to these effusive greetings, he was always glad when Tristram was not by to witness them. "In a few days we, too, shall be leaving Florence."

Standing over him in his great black cloak, Signor della Torre Vecchia shook his head dolefully. "I doubt if it is wise—whether you will really be fit to travel."

At this point the landlord, with many apologies, desired to be permitted to set down the coffee on the table near the couch, and the guest had to make way for him.

"Your Excellencies have everything they require?" asked he. "Signor Ungerford is just come in; he reads his correspondence. The courier has arrived, but there are no other letters." One overflowing smile, he bowed himself out.

"Pray sit down, Signore," said Dormer. "We will not wait for Mr. Hungerford." And he stretched out his arm to the coffee.

"Ah, but you must allow me, in the circumstances, to do that!" said Torre Vecchia quickly, and he snatched away the tray. "With what pleasure should I not have done this for you up at Fiesole," he observed wistfully, as he poured out the coffee. "It will always be a life-long regret to me that you would not permit me to remove you to Villa San Giuliano."

"As if I were not sufficiently indebted to you without that!" exclaimed the Englishman. "For all your kindness to a stranger I can make no return but to hope that, when you visit England again, you will come to Oxford as my guest."

Torre Vecchia gave him, with his coffee, a promise that he would do so, and flowed on in a gentle but swift-running stream of converse, while Dormer began to wonder why Tristram did not join them. Finally he apologised for him, suggesting that he did not know of the Italian's presence. Torre Vecchia made a large gesture that excused him.

"We were told," said he, "that he is reading his letters, and who can say whether there is not one from his betrothed. Pray do not have him disturbed. . . . You know, Signore, that your Church is very fortunate in possessing material of the type of Signor Hungerford for her pastors—for I understand that he is about to enter that estate. Is it not true that the English country gentleman has an equal, if not a superior, in the parson, who is a man of the world, with a training of the University, whereas ours are . . . to put it delicately, not high born, and seminary bred. . . . But here I am on this topic again—and I hope, Signore, that in

our most interesting conversation of yesterday, when I said how much I disliked our system of enforced celibacy for the clergy, I did not seem to be criticising Holy Church, of which I trust I am a faithful son."

Dormer relieved him of this apprehension, and he continued :

" But there are these two points which, when I feel I shall not be misunderstood, I cannot help deploring —most of all the enforced celibacy." Torre Vecchia dropped his voice and looked round, apparently to make sure that they were alone, ere he went on earnestly, " 'Signore, consider the isolated position of the ordinary priest, consider the number of things enjoyed by his fellow-men that he must renounce—above all, that great happiness, which our holy religion sanctifies for others, but which it forbids him even to think of for himself. His life may inspire respect, even admiration, but it excites—in me, at least—regret for so much rigour, which is surely in contradiction with what Nature and God Himself have implanted. . . . I find it so extraordinary that you, a divine of the English Church, do not agree with me!"

" But I do, in a sense," retorted Dormer. " I rejoice that our clergy are free to marry or not to marry ; only I would wish to see the majority unmarried."

" You would deprive them then of those pure pleasures which your Church allows, the pleasures of a home, of a wife, of children ? "

" I would not deprive them of these. But I would have the greater number deprive themselves."

Torre Vecchia lifted his hands and eyes to heaven. " But this is the spirit of Catholic asceticism, and yet you are not a Catholic ! I am more puzzled than ever. You and your friends, you tell me, believe in the Real

Presence, in the apostolical succession, in the power of the keys, and yet when I was in England last I never met a single person who seemed even to have heard of such things!"

"Perhaps not, but they will hear some day," said Dormer quietly, and at that moment Tristram entered, full of apologies, which were met by counter-apologies from the Italian, and finally merged into a scene of leavetaking, as the latter discovered that it was later than he thought.

"You must make amends for your absence now, Signore," he said, smiling at Tristram, "by allowing me to call upon you when next I am in England. And in spite of your friend's views (which never cease to astonish me) I cannot help hoping that this will be in one of those delicious country parsonages, embowered in roses, bright with wife and child, to which I have before now been welcomed—at what you call the 'family-living,' in short!"

He left Tristram deprived of speech and once more bent over Dormer. "And for you, my dear friend, how I wish I could have seen you restored to perfect health before I left! I am putting a carriage at your entire disposal. Every afternoon one of my people shall come round and see if you need it. No, no thanks, I beg . . . I must veritably fly. Addio, caro amico; I trust I may say a rivederci." Uttering further swift and polite phrases, and flinging his cloak round him with the art of the South, he was gone.

Almost ere the door had closed Dormer had rolled over like a boy and buried his face in the sofa-cushions. "Why did you not come in before, you wretch!" he ejaculated. "I have been having such a disquisition, all to myself. What on earth were you doing? It was

no time for reading letters." Turning over again, as a thought struck him, he said abruptly: "I hope that well-meaning blunderer did not hurt you?"

"Of course not," answered his friend. "But . . . I've just had bad news." And he went and sat down in the Italian's vacant place.

Dormer struggled off the sofa. "My dear fellow, what is it?"

"She's been very ill. The Rector had to go over—her child was born prematurely."

Dormer gave an exclamation. "Did it live?"

"She was in great danger for four days," said Tristram, running his hands through his hair, "in great danger, and I never knew! It must have been about the time that we got here. The letter was temporarily lost, I suppose. Yes, the child lived. This second letter of the Rector's, dated about a month ago, which has reached me at the same time as the first, says that he is not satisfied with the reports he has of her, and that he would be very glad if I could see her before crossing the Channel."

CHAPTER XVII

(1)

A FORTNIGHT later they drove into Paris.

Tristram had written to Horatia announcing the probable date of their arrival, but, as in his trouble he had omitted to give their address, there was no letter to greet him, no invitation to stay instead at the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon, as there would have been had she known where he would be. He was rather glad when he realised, on arrival, what he had done. It was late. Next day he sent a note by a messenger saying that he and Dormer would call in the early afternoon.

In the morning he went out by himself, and leaning over the Pont Royal watched the Seine running to the sea. Much water had slipped under that bridge since last he was in Paris. He smiled at the commonplaceness of the thought; but it was true, nevertheless. Did Horatia ever cross the bridge?—of course she must often do so. Paris was different from the Paris of old —different from any other city in the world, now.

One of the views of the world was before him, where up the stream Notre Dame lay magnificently at anchor. In his lonely walks in Florence Tristram had acquired the habit of going almost every day into some church or other; the desire to enter one now came upon him, and he left his post and made his way, not however to Notre Dame, but to the church which was to him the most attractive in Paris, St. Etienne du Mont.

The beautiful jubé burst on his senses with a new surprise; the splendid windows blazed again. He knelt down, undisturbed by a couple of tourists who were wandering round. The church was full of light; the wonderful exultant lines of the screen caught up his spirit, and he saw once more, not with the faint sense of regret which once he had, that the most jewelled of the windows were set up high in the clerestory, where the eye had to seek for them. St. Etienne meant that, then—the rapture, the ardour, the flaming ecstasy of sacrifice—more, of sacrifice that seemed uncalled for. Would he ever know it, or must he always feel that he gave, not grudgingly indeed, but without a grain of the incense of joy?

(2)

He thought of the church as he and Dormer walked rather silently along the Rue St. Dominique that afternoon and came at last to the gateway of the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon. Yes, he had made the sacrifice completely; it could not be redemanded now, even though he was to see her, to touch her hand. It was relief unspeakable to know this; nine months, six months ago he could not have met her. Yet he had a quite ordinary dread of the encounter, of its strangeness, of the feeling that something had come down and shut her off. Would she be looking ill?

He had said to Dormer that he rather anticipated being received in the midst of a family gathering, since he was known to the Marquis as well, and since Armand was indeed no little in his debt. He was pleased to find that this was not the case. The lackey led them up the stairs to Horatia's boudoir. Madame la Comtesse (how unfamiliar!) was expecting them.

At first sight, as Horatia rose to greet them, Tristram thought, " Yes, she has been ill, she looks a woman, but she is the same." She had for a moment all her old vivacity, her delightful smile, the same trick of screwing her eyes up when she talked. She gave him just the welcome that he might have had in Berkshire. He was even able to remember, as she held out her hand to Dormer, all the hits she used to aim at his friend.

" I hope you are quite recovered from your accident, Mr. Dormer," she said. " You must not stand a moment, I am sure. Let us all sit down, and we can gossip comfortably."

She waved them into chairs. The voice, the words, were just Horatia's own ; the air a little more assured, more mature—that of Madame la Comtesse de la Roche-Guyon. No harm in that.

She talked on lightly. Papa, she was certain, had been alarming Tristram unnecessarily ; she was as well as ever she had been in her life. And why had not Tristram given her an address ?—could they not come and stay at the Hôtel now ? Presently they must see her son, and Armand would soon be in.

And as she talked the sense of effort began to be apparent, the glow, the first illusion faded. She was not the same Horatia ; she was not even the Comtesse de la Roche-Guyon, an Horatia ripened by her station, she was somehow different. She had not the same vitality. This was what her illness had done to her, thought Tristram—drained away some of that almost childish and petulant animation which he used to love in her. Spring had left those green boughs, perhaps not to revisit them. He was sad ; and sat a little silent while she talked, without telling them much, about Armand, about this, that, and the other, about her own

pleasure in seeing them, ending at last by saying, " Perhaps we had better be going now into the salon."

So they followed her to that apartment where, throned in state on a sofa, out of deference to the English prejudice against being received in a bedroom, sat the Duchesse—and Tristram was momentarily startled to perceive that her hair, as he innocently supposed it to be, was of almost the same shade as Horatia's. Beside her, talking with great animation, was a young and fashionably dressed woman, the Marquise de Beaulieu. His old acquaintance Emmanuel was standing by these two, and in a window a tall ecclesiastic whom he did not know was conversing with a shrivelled little old lady equally unknown to him.

" Aha ! " said the Dowager, " so this is the celebrated M. Hungerford to whom, I understand, our young couple owe their present felicity." And she tendered her small aged hand with a smile that unmasked the full battery of her false teeth. " I have also to thank you, Monsieur, for your kind hospitality to my son, as well as to my grandson. And why, I pray, are we to be given no opportunity of returning so many obligations ? " And while, with half-bantering condescension, she proceeded in this vein, and Emmanuel greeted him again with genuine pleasure, Tristram was conscious that Dormer, rescued from his momentary fall into the clutches of Madame de Beaulieu, was borne off and presented by Horatia to the priest in the window. Then Armand appeared, with a smile for everybody, delighted to see his former host, very gallant to his wife. *He* had not altered. Eventually he separated Tristram from the Duchesse and his brother, and began to make courteous and tactful inquiries about his " old friends " at Compton, but all the while Tristram's mind was busy trying

to account for the change in Horatia. He was beginning to think it due, not to her illness exactly, but to the atmosphere in which she lived, to these over-many relations, amongst whom her identity, once so strong, seemed almost lost.

Presently further stir, and Maurice was borne in like a relic, and deposited in a strange shrine, his great-grandmother's lap. Somewhat to Tristram's surprise, Armand immediately went over to him and presented his finger; the infant, whose face had assumed an anxious expression, crowed loudly and seized it.

"Small doubt that he is thy son, mauvais sujet," Tristram heard the Duchesse to remark sotto voce to her grandson. "His eyes are more like thine every day. Do not throw thyself about thus, little one; I have held many children before thee."

But Tristram, the prey of a curious fascination, remained where he was. And all this while, too, Horatia was sitting leaning her head on her hand, at the other side of the room, alone, almost unnoticed, except that Dormer, though still talking to Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon, was looking at her intently. It was true that Horatia's eyes were fixed upon the group round the sofa, or rather upon its centre; their expression was not to be read, but the weariness, the profound lassitude of her pose was the ineffaceable thing which Tristram carried away from the scene—that, and Armand's look as he stooped over their child.

CHAPTER XVIII

(1)

When Tristram and Dormer had departed, and the family party broken up, the Comtesse de la Roche-Guyon went to her own apartments and wept hysterically. The following Sunday she resumed her attendance at Morning Prayer.

The reason for her action was not far to seek. Of all the emotions which the sight of Tristram had called up, homesickness was the most piercing. She had not let him see it ; she had not thought, before he came, that she was capable of any more feeling. She had told herself, when she got his letter from Italy, that she was far too miserable to care whether he came or no. But when she talked with him, when the sound of his voice had rekindled all the past years of happiness, she desired passionately the things of home, more even than when her father had come over, for then she had hardly strength for a wish of any kind.

She had long been putting off going again to the Embassy chapel, on the score that she was not well enough ; on the same pretext she did not read Morning Prayer with Martha either. It was only occasionally that she said her own prayers. She told herself that probably there was no God at all. But now, with Tristram's visit, there sprang up immediately the desire for this renewal of contact with things English, because

she felt that there she could indulge in a very luxury of unhappiness. She went with that intention.

But the effect was wholly different from her anticipations. Morning Prayer, both in its religious and national aspects, may be said to produce an atmosphere if repeated often enough. It disposes the mind to the ideals of duty, uprightness, and faithfulness. It does not move immediately to the heights and depths of great sacrifices, as the Mass will do, though in the end the result is perhaps the same. Horatia came away that Sunday from the Embassy Chapel with a most uncomfortable doubt whether she were really being, not a noble, injured, suffering wife, but a rather ignominious and cowardly person. Would not her father be shocked at her failure in wifely duty? Would not all the generations of Grenvilles behind her have been shocked ?

The idea was so unpleasant that she strove with it, and, having actually caught a slight cold during the week, absolved herself from attending Divine Service for some time.

(2)

Madame de Vigerie, since her astonishing reception of him at the New Year, had been many times called by Armand de la Roche-Guyon his good angel and his guiding star. And, in a political sense at least, she was not unworthy of these appellations. Horatia never knew to whom she owed it that her husband was not implicated in the conspiracy of the Rue des Prouvaires to gain access to the Tuileries and assassinate the Royal Family, the discovery of which, at the beginning of February, shook Paris. The enterprise was not

chivalrous enough for Laurence de Vigerie's taste. There were more stirring plans afoot, for a rising on which all was to be staked was now much more imminent than it had been in the summer, and she was in even closer communication than before with the Regent's little court at Massa, that combination of the Coblentz of the emigration and the Paris of the Fronde. There was much to keep them occupied, for there was division not only among Madame's immediate counsellors, but also in the Royalist committees in France. That in Paris wished the rising adjourned ; those in the provinces desired it immediately. These problems demanded daily intercourse, and, indeed, now that his wife had disavowed all interest in his doings, Armand considered himself free to visit the Rue de la Chaussee d'Antin as often as he liked. To many a moth the light of a guiding star may well be attractive above all others.

February slipped away, with the discovery of the plot, the trials of the implicated. The salons of the Faubourg were divided between those who, denying the conspiracy, ridiculed Louis-Philippe's baseless fears, and those who mourned its ill-success. Tristram Hungerford came and left, March entered, and Lent ; Maurice was producing his first tooth, and George Sand her first novel. In England the Reform Bill passed the Commons ; and in France Horatia was combatting the influence of Morning Prayer.

But to Armand himself the most important event of the month was a little conversation which occurred during its second week. He had sent Madame de Vigerie flowers, as he constantly did, and came in one afternoon to find her bending over some lilies of the valley.

"I wonder who gave me these," she said.

" Cannot you guess ? " asked Armand. He took out a spray and held it towards her. " They were meant for a better place than that vase."

The Vicomtesse smiled and shook her head. " I never wear flowers, save those that I pick myself."

" I have noticed that you never wear mine," said Armand.

" Nor anybody else's."

" Why not ? "

" Just a whim," said Madame de Vigerie, turning away.

" I believe I can read your mind," said Armand slowly. " Laurence, you are like a bird of the woods. You will not come to any man's whistling, and it means too much to you to wear a favour."

She turned on him half grave, half gay. " Mon ami, you have guessed right. But I love your flowers . . . I love to have them near me. I will do anything but wear them."

" And some day," said the young man softly, " you will do that. Or am I never to hope for it, Laurence ? "

" No," she said, " I shall never wear them." But she did not meet his eyes.

" But if you ever did . . ."

" O, suppose that I wore the stars as a necklace ! " cried she. " It is as likely."

" But if you ever did," persisted Armand. " Laurence, if you ever did . . ."

" Yes," she said, turning very pale. . . .

(3)

March had all but completed its course with dust and wind, and at its extreme end Lent had come to a temporary pause for the Carnival.

Armand de la Roche-Guyon had just finished dressing for a costume ball. The long mirror in his dressing-room, reflected him, clad from head to foot in white and gold, in ruff, doublet and hose, a gentleman of the Valois court. The dress, blazing with jewels, had been copied from a well-known picture of Charles IX. From the little flat cap with a feather set on the side of his handsome head to his shoes the costume suited him admirably, and his valet, standing by him, had just expressed this opinion.

"The mask, M. le Comte, and the domino?"

"No dominos to-night, but I will take it for a cloak. At what time did I order the carriage to be ready?"

"Not for a quarter of an hour yet, M. le Comte."

"Well, you can go. Give me the mask."

The man departed, and Armand, humming an air, the mask dangling from his hand, tried altering by an inch or two the position of the dagger at his hip. Then he looked at the clock, and on what seemed a sudden impulse, threw down the mask upon a sofa and went out of the room.

"He'll be frightened to death if he sees you like that, Sir," said Martha, looking with disapprobation at the costume which had already given her "a turn" in the corridor, where she now stood with its wearer.

"But since he is asleep . . ." said Armand ingratiatingly.

Mrs. Kemblet shook her head, but opening the door with infinite precautions, allowed her master to enter, and watched from the doorway.

"Extraordinary how fond he is of him, to be sure," thought she, to whom the male heart was a perpetual mystery. Horatia very rarely came to say Good-night

to the child ; and the female heart being an even profounder riddle it was not given to Mrs. Kemblet nor to anyone else to know how often she longed to do so.

As it befell, however, this night the desire had been too strong for her.

Martha saw the Comtesse far down the corridor. She was in her dressing-gown, her hair hanging in great plaits. Two courses were open to Mrs. Kemblet; to prevent, by warning her mistress, a meeting which in the circumstances might have softening consequences, or to further it by removing herself. She chose the latter, and vanished before she could be seen.

The door, ajar and unguarded, surprised Horatia. Very gently, so as to run no risk of waking the child, she pushed it a little wider. Her eyes, accustomed to the brighter light of the corridor, took in slowly the dim room, the shaded nightlight, and, by the side of the crib, a slim silkclad figure stooped over the occupant, its dark head almost touching the pillow.

Without a sound Horatia looked ; without a sound she moved away.

(4)

At the door of the ballroom Armand paused a moment adjusted his mask, and entered.

Although everybody was masked none were wearing dominos, and provided a guest's disguise were already known it was easy to identify him. But there was so great a crowd that it was difficult to find a given person, and Armand looked in vain among the throng of monks, courtiers, dancing girls and devils, for the high headdress of Madame de Vigerie's fourteenth century costume, in which, as he knew, she was impersonating Jeanne de Flandre, the wife of Jean de Montfort, Duke

of Brittany, as she rode with him into Nantes in 1341. But at last he saw in a doorway, above the sea of heads, the peak of the hennin, with its floating veil of golden gauze. It must be she. Before he could get through the crowd he had to watch the hennin vanish without having seen the face beneath it, and ere he could pursue it further he was seized upon by an acquaintance and led up to a mask who represented Esmeralda, the heroine of Hugo's successful novel of the previous year. The lady was lively, and he was engaged in converse with her when, halfway down the long room, he caught sight of the tall headdress again, in the company of a Dominican friar, and he turned eagerly to look.

Yes, it was Laurence, in a flowing dress of purple over gold. The room suddenly filled with mist . . . for on her breast, tucked into the high golden girdle, lay two white roses, the flowers he had sent her that afternoon. . . .

"Beau masque, you are pale," said the voice of Esmeralda in his ear. "What has disturbed you—you are ill, perhaps?"

The violins struck up as, for answer, Armand seized her. "You shall see if I am ill! Can you dance till daybreak, Esmeralda?"

In the frenzy of rapture that possessed him he scarcely knew how his partners changed. Now he was dancing deliriously with an odalisque, now with a nun. His tongue ran riot like his blood; but he never came on the gold and purple dress again, though once or twice he saw it in the distance. Well, he could wait . . . And at last, the pendulum swinging from exultation into dreams, he escaped from the hot ballroom into the quiet of the garden, and tried to think.

When he came back, twenty minutes later, the dancing had ceased, though the violins were still playing madly. On the shining floor of the great room the dancers were broken up into groups, talking in low voices. Many had unmasked, and showed faces oddly whitened; some were hurrying away. At one end of the room a woman was screaming; near him another, the odalisque, had fainted. No one was caring for her. What had happened? He thought at first that Louis Philippe had been assassinated, that the Duchesse de Berry was dead.

Then he caught the awful whisper that was passing from mouth to mouth. And hearing it, half-crazy with terror, he ran wildly out into the street, in the direction of the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin.

(5)

The Marquis Emmanuel de la Roche-Guyon, never a very good sleeper, was wakeful to-night. He had worked till nearly twelve o'clock at his monograph on the seaweeds of France, now approaching completion. Then he had sat a long time with his chin on his hand, thinking of the past, the only person awake in the great house, where they kept early hours. The lamp lit up his comfortable, untidy, prosperous surroundings, and the little bits of feathered stuff from the deep on which he tried to nourish a starved heart.

After a while he sighed and stirred. The room seemed hot; he would take a turn in the courtyard before retiring, and perhaps the fresh air would bring him sleep.

It was thus that he met his brother. Across the courtyard, lit by a faint, clouded moon and by the single

oil lamp that burnt all night, there was coming, staggering, a figure which at first Emmanuel could not believe in, much less recognise—a gallant of the court of the later Valois, in ruff, doublet and hose. The Marquis almost rubbed his eyes ; was it a ghost ? Then, as the apparition drew nearer, he saw that it was his brother, with a face like death.

" Armand, in God's name, what is the matter ? " he cried, catching hold of him as he lurched by. " Are you hurt ? are you drunk ? "

Armand threw back his head. " They would not let me in ! " he said between his teeth. " They would not let me in, and she is dying . . . Stand out of the way ! I am going to get my pistols."

" Indeed you are not ! " said his elder, understanding nothing of his speech, but reading a very frenzy of desperation in his demeanour. He seized him by the shoulders. " You do not go into the house until you have explained yourself. Where have you been ? Who is dying ? "

" Let me go, curse you ! " exclaimed Armand, struggling in his grip. Then the strength seemed suddenly to ebb from him. " It is Laurence, Madame de Vigerie," he gasped. " She was at the ball—I saw her myself ; then she disappeared before I could speak to her . . . and she was wearing my flowers . . . do you hear, Emmanuel, she was wearing my flowers ! Then I heard . . . she was dying . . . I went to her house . . . I sat a long time on the steps . . . they would not let me in . . . then I came here . . . she was wearing my roses . . . and now she is dying——"

" Dying ! " ejaculated his brother. " And at the ball ! What——"

" The cholera ! " said Armand in a choking voice.

"O my God!" He freed himself from Emmanuel's loosened hold, and throwing himself down on the steps lay there like one bereft of life, his face hidden.

So the pendent sword had descended! The cholera had been advancing on France for years; this, Carnival-tide, was then its chosen time of striking. The Marquis's first thought was of what was to come on Paris; his second, of the immediate future. If Horatia were to see Armand in this condition! . . .

He bent over the huddled form, plucking it by the short velvet cloak whose flame-coloured lining showed pale in the faint light.

"Armand, get up! You must not give way like this. Come with me, and I will take you to our cousin's."

He dragged his brother, unresisting, to his feet, and piloted him out into the street, past the horrified concierge, and somehow, a little later, they found themselves at Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon's door. Prosper seemed to keep later hours than his secular kin, and they were admitted without difficulty. Armand wandered unsteadily to a chair and threw himself down in it, and at that moment the curtain at the end of the long room was pulled aside, and Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon, looking startlingly tall in his long cassock, came out of what was, in effect, his private oratory.

"Who is that?" he asked in surprise, pointing to the white figure.

His cousin in a low voice gave him a short review of the situation. "Can you keep him here, at least for the night?" he asked in conclusion. "He is scarcely responsible, I think, for his actions."

Prosper's keen, grave gaze ran over the details of costume; of face he could see nothing. "Do you think he is likely to do himself an injury?" he whispered.

He too could act quickly on occasions. He went to his cousin. "Armand!" he said, laying a hand on the bowed shoulders, while with the other he successfully plucked from its sheath the jewelled dagger at the young man's hip. This he held out behind his back to Emmanuel, who took and concealed it.

The Comte slowly lifted his head. "What do you want with me?" he asked stupidly. "Are you come to bury her already?"

"Armand," said his cousin, "could you not sleep a little? No one will disturb you here, and in the morning . . ."

"In the morning she will be dead. They will put my white roses on her coffin. She should not have worn them . . . Why are you staring at me like that, Prosper? You had better get back to your candles and things in there . . . No, do not say that you will pray for her! She does not want it—no, nor I, by God! I did not come here to be prayed over . . . though I suppose you would like to . . . Yes, I suppose you would call it the judgment of God. Isn't that so? Answer me, priest—though you are my cousin!"

Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon did not flinch. "I should call it the mercy of God," he said very gently.

An angry flush dyed Armand's pale face. For a second he looked as if he were going to strike Prosper; then he changed his mind, and shrugging his shoulders, he turned away. "Priests will be priests," he said with a sneer. "Come, Emmanuel, I have had my benediction. Let us be going."

"I think it is too late to go back," observed the Marquis quietly. "Prosper will give us hospitality to-night."

His brother gave a short scornful laugh. "So that

was why you brought me here! Very well—only for God's sake go away and don't stand staring at me. I don't want a bed. Do you suppose I shall sleep?—Go, you guardians of respectability!"

They left him: there was nothing else to do.

Towards dawn the Marquis came into the room again. All was quiet but the fire, and at first he could not see his brother anywhere. Then for a second or two his heart stood still, for he perceived Armand stretched motionless on the floor in front of the hearth, and there was something ominous in his attitude, in the pool of deep colour round his body, in the living, moving stains of crimson on the breast of his doublet. . . .

It was only a moment's illusion, gone as the elder man came quickly towards the fire. Worn out with emotion, Armand had evidently flung himself down there, had fallen profoundly asleep where he lay on the red Eastern rug, and the firelight winked on the jewels of his masquerade. Nevertheless, as he lay with sealed eyes at Emmanuel's feet, clad in the dress of that period of violent deaths, with one arm outflung on the parquet, his upturned face haggard and unfamiliar in the close-fitting ruff, he looked so lifeless that the Marquis was glad to think that Prosper had abstracted the poniard from its sheath.

Though, indeed, he knew his brother too well to imagine that he would ever dream of sacrificing his life, even for the person he loved best at the moment. A faintly cynical but not untender smile came to Emmanuel's lips as he stood there. "Sleep well, my brother," he said under his breath, and went very quietly out of the room.

(6)

" Cholera ? Oh dear no, nor anything like it," said the doctor next morning to the anxious cousins. " Nervous shock, a touch of fever. I have let him blood. Keep him quiet and he will be all right in a couple of days. I wish we were all as far from the grave. But, Messieurs, as for the cholera, though M. le Comte has it not, we are all going to see more of it, I doubt, than we shall like . . ."

" You have told him, I suppose, that Madame de Vigerie is likely to recover ? " asked Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon as the doctor left the room.

" Yes," said Emmanuel, " and also that it has already been arranged for my sister and the children to go to Plaisance at once."

He went in again to his brother, in the priest's own, narrow, cell-like bedroom with its carved prie-dieu, its sacred prints and its agonised ivory crucifix. Armand, pale, but no longer ghastly, was lying back in an arm-chair without his doublet, his knees wrapped in a quilt, with a bandaged left arm to testify to the doctor's activity. He smiled at his visitor.

" Mon vieux, what made you think I had the cholera ? I was never so well in my life—since your news, bien entendu. Do you think Prosper will tell me how many candles I should put up to Our Lady—but perhaps St. Roch or St. Sebastian would be more appropriate. Now that old butcher has gone I must dress and go round to the Chaussée d'Antin ; but I have no clothes suitable to the streets in daylight. Will Prosper lend me a cassock, think you ? I believe I was rather rude to him last night, but his duty as a Christian will oblige

him to forgive me. . . . Sais-tu, Emmanuel, that the cholera, if only it strike hard enough, may be the best ally that Henri V could have? And how can I work for Henri V sitting here in my shirt among these objects of piety? As well be a sacristan. . . ."

CHAPTER XIX

(I)

Out of a cloudless sky a hard, bright, metallic sun was shining upon Paris, as it had shone, without variation, for the last five weeks, looking down unwinking on a Terror worse than that of '93. And along the deserted streets its companion, the glacial East wind, frolicked in a dance of death, stirring the April dust, and fluttering, on the Pont Neuf, the black flag which Henri Quatre held in his hands of stone. Neither Charles X nor Louis-Philippe reigned in Paris now, but the cholera. Long ago the supply of hearses had proved insufficient, and there crawled along, to gather up the daily harvest of eight or nine hundred dead, artillery waggons, furniture vans, even fiacres. Even so, a sheeted corpse could often be seen in a doorway awaiting burial—to receive it, perhaps, at the hands of that devoted company of young men which numbered some of the first names of France. Yet the machinery of life worked on as usual—the Chambers and the law courts sat, the Bourse was open, professors lectured and the theatres were far from empty, though not a soul had more than half a hope of seeing the sun rise next day, and every time a man left his home he said farewell to wife and child.

From an archway in the long Rue de Sèvres, literally a street of the dead, for on one side at least there was

not a single house unstricken, came suddenly a tall priest in a cassock, a garb not seen till now, in the streets of Paris, since the Days of July. His eyes, sunk in a tired, strained face, blinked a little as they met the light, for it had been dark in the garret where he had just confessed the dying man—the fourth cholera patient whom he had visited that day. He pulled the cloak he was wearing closer over his breast as he turned north-eastward and met the wind.

As he crossed the end of the Rue du Bac a fiacre passed him at a lumbering trot, a coffin across the seat. Ere the noise and rattle had died away in the sunny, silent street, the priest heard alert steps behind him, and a voice that he knew well crying, "Prosper! Prosper! que diable! stop a moment!"

Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon slackened his pace and turned his head, but did not stop. "I have just come from a case."

Armand, arriving abreast of his cousin, sniffed at the saturated handkerchief which he held. "Peste, so I supposed. (By the way, how very apt is that expletive just now!) But everybody has either come from a case, or is going to a case . . . or is about to become a case, so that is nothing. I will walk with you; I am going this way."

"How is our grandmother?" asked the priest, as they fell into step together.

"Never better. Strange how she fears a cold and defies the plague. She keeps her rooms inundated with camphor and chloride. But Madame de Camain died last night, and the Comtesse de Montlivault, I hear this morning, is 'prise.'"

"God have mercy on them!" said Prosper, crossing himself. "It seems to me that in the last few days the

Faubourg St. Germain has suffered more than the poorer quarters."

"That is so, I believe," returned his cousin. "Figure to yourself that the rabbit warren of the Palais-Royal is apparently more healthy than our large houses with their gardens, for I am told that there has not been a single case in those airless glass passages."

They walked on in silence for a little, their footsteps echoing in the deserted street, the icy wind cold on their faces, the sun fierce overhead. Even Armand, untouched by the pest, by labours for the stricken, or, apparently, by apprehension, looked ill, though he was jauntily dressed in the new spring fashions, in a peacock-blue coat with olive-green collar, a flowered waistcoat and white cashmere trousers. The sight of a man hurrying past them, holding an onion to his nose, struck him into speech again.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "I had really rather have the cholera than carry about a raw onion. You do not carry anything, I notice, Prosper; not, I dare say, that it is much good.—By the way, I have long been wanting to tell you that I regard you as the bravest man I know, and if (as is probable) you have heard me say anything uncomplimentary about priests I beg you will consider it unsaid. I am really proud to be your kinsman. . . . Don't spoil it by saying that you are only doing your duty, or tell me that the Archbishop of Paris has come out of hiding and the Archbishop of Besançon returned from Rome to do the same as you are doing, for I do not believe that even his Eminence of Rohan dislikes it as much as you. Mort de ma vie, but you must have seen some horrible things lately!"

"The worst thing that I have seen," said Monsignor

de la Roche-Guyon sadly, " was not the visitation of the plague, but the outburst of the vile passions of men, excited by fear, and played upon by the unscrupulous."

" You mean the murders, at the beginning of the outbreak, due to the report that it was caused by poison ? But what can you expect ? There was a man hanged on a lamp-post, as in the good old times, in one of those very streets, for the same reason. And the Republican newspapers have proclaimed that even the cholera is a scourge less cruel than the government of Louis-Philippe. You remember how the Duc d'Orléans went with the late Casimir Périer to the Hôtel-Dieu to visit the sick ? Well, they said that Louis-Philippe had sent his son there to gloat over the misery of the people, and that the people would return his visit . . . after the manner of the Tenth of August and the Twenty-ninth of July ! "

The young man's tone was not free from satisfaction. The priest, aware of the alliance between a certain section of the Legitimists and the Extreme Left, turned and looked at him.

" I hope," he said sternly, " that Madame's party does not stain their cause by using such weapons."

" We have no need," returned Armand with an air. " You will soon see the gleam of the noblest weapon of all—the sword."

" The sword, so be it ! " said Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon. " But not the dagger—not another conspiracy of the Rue des Prouvaires, I trust."

They had come to the Place St. Sulpice, and stopped.

" You speak as if I had been implicated in that," said his cousin, rather aggrieved. " Or as if I were M. de Berthier, who tried to run over the King and Queen. No, I am for a stroke of a different kind. Wait a little,

a very little, Prosper, and you will see the South in flames for Marie-Caroline, and then the West, Brittany, and Vendée . . ."

"And then?"

"Then you will see Louis-Philippe, his large family and his umbrella, disencumbering the Tuileries of their presence, and at Rheims a child—a mother and child—crowned . . . as you may see at this hour in there." He pointed with one hand to the façade of St. Sulpice, while with the other he tugged something from his pocket.

"Cousin, you do not serve your cause by blasphemy!" said the priest sharply.

Armand looked innocent. "But I thought the idea would appeal to you! It occurs to me, as an omen, every time I enter a church. *Mea culpa!* . . . Take this for your cholera cases, Monsignor, in expiation. I was going to give it you in any case, but now it will atone, perhaps, for comparing Marie-Caroline to Our Lady. Au revoir—if the Fates permit." He thrust a roll of notes into his cousin's hand, lifted his hat, and turned down the Rue du Pot-de-Fer towards the Luxembourg.

(2)

It was not to admire the spring foliage of the trees in that now deserted garden that Armand walked slowly eastwards along one of its alleys. Yet he was engaged, rather strangely, in counting the trunks. When he reached the thirty-fifth, he stopped, looked about for the nearest seat, and sitting down upon it, pulled an opened letter from his pocket and re-read it.

It was from his wife at Plaisance, the family seat in

Normandy, whither she and the child had been sent for safety. It informed him merely that she and Maurice were very well, and concluded by hoping that all at the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon were in the same condition.

Armand made a slight grimace as he folded and refolded this epistle. Stretched out on the seat, his eyes raised to the new leaves, it occurred to him again to wish that his wife were a Catholic, and had a director, who might perhaps prescribe to her a more conciliatory line of conduct. Once, indeed, he had congratulated himself that in his domestic affairs, at least, no priest could intermeddle; now he thought regretfully of a certain friend of his acquaintance, a great deal more culpable than he, whose wife, in obedience (he suspected) to her confessor, was trying to win back her husband by a demeanour of unvarying amiability. Well, that was certainly not Horatia's way at present, nor was he sure that he would have liked it if it had been; but it would have made things more comfortable.

He had not set eyes on Laurence de Vigerie since the fatal night of the masked ball a month ago. As soon as she could be moved she had been hurried out of Paris under medical supervision, and she was now completing her convalescence at Spa, whence she wrote to him every few days. It had needed all her influence to keep him from following her thither, indeed he had only been restrained by her express prohibition, and the knowledge that if he left Paris at this juncture he cut himself off from communication with the cause for which they were both working. For, as Armand had hinted to his cousin, a crisis in Legitimist affairs was very near now. Since February the Duchesse de Berry had definitely resolved to come to France. The younger and more ardent spirits of her party, impatient of delay, con-

tinually wrote urging her to hasten. Now, with the cholera occupying the attention of the government, which had, moreover, lost Casimir-Périer from its head, with the Republicans about to rise, so it was rumoured, against Louis-Philippe, the favourable moment seemed at last arrived. And Armand, deprived of his regular channel of information through Madame de Vigerie, had come to this peaceful resort in quest of news.

He had not long to wait, for there presently approached along the deserted avenue, from the opposite direction, another gilded youth of about his own age, muffled almost up to his eyes in a cloak. He also appeared to be counting the trees, and when he arrived opposite Armand's seat came and sat down on it, without looking at its occupant. Then, without warning, he suddenly shot out the word "Marie."

"Caroline," responded Armand instantly.

And they both looked at each other and laughed, for if these conspirators resorted sometimes to the methods of opéra-bouffe, they did not take them very seriously.

"Any news this morning?" inquired Armand.

"The best," answered the other. "Late last night the Committee received a letter from Madame for transmission to the chiefs in the West, warning them to be ready by the third of May. She has probably embarked by now!"

Armand stared at him a moment. Then he sprang to his feet, and lifting his olive-green hat, cried aloud to the empty garden: "At last, at last! Vive la guerre!"

CHAPTER XX

(1)

"But, my aunt," protested Claude-Edmond, "what is a 'calender'? It is evidently not an almanac, but a person."

Horatia laid down the "Arabian Nights" and laughed, a little laugh of real enjoyment. "Do you know, Claude," she said, "that I have never been quite sure myself. If you would find out for me I should be very grateful to you." She slid her hand a moment over her nephew's head, and Claude-Edmond, a Gallic child, caught and conveyed it with respect and affection to his lips.

It was impossible to be unhappy this morning. It was May. Behind Horatia's back lay the great mass of Plaisance, all built in the style of the stables of Chantilly, with flanking pavilions, chapel and laundry, and in front the two immense lime-tree avenues, now gloriously green, and the artificial pieces of water reminiscent of Versailles, with stone urns of tortured design, and stone animals, wolves and lions. On the grass by Claude-Edmond lay the rod with which he had been unsuccessfully fishing for carp in these lakes, before his aunt began her present occupation of reading the "Arabian Nights" to him in English. A little way off Maurice was being slowly walked to and fro in Martha's arms. And it was May.

"With your permission, I should like to kiss my

cousin," said Claude-Edmond suddenly, indicating his infant relative.

"I have the same desire myself," returned Horatia, and Martha, coming to a stand, offered her charge for inspection.

" Did I once have only two teeth—only one tooth ? " inquired Charles-Edmond.

" No teeth at all, once," responded his aunt.

Claude felt his existing dental arrangements. " There is one loose now," he announced. " May I pull it out ? "

"Let me see," said Horatia; and, after inspection, " I should wait a little if I were you, Claude. It will be looser yet. Besides, it will hurt."

" I know," said the child. " But one must learn to bear pain, must one not ? "

" I wish you were not such a little prig," thought Horatia, and instantly repented of the thought. "Yes," she said gently, " but we need not inflict it on ourselves unnecessarily. Give Maurice to me for a little, Martha. Claude, could you fetch my chair over here ? "

Delightedly the boy sped off. That his aunt should give him something to do for her was the summit of his desires. When Horatia sat down he stood by her, studying Maurice, who, sucking his fist, in his turn studied the sky.

" He does not remind me greatly of Uncle Armand," observed his cousin. " His face is . . . is . . ." He paused for a word.

" Never mind," said Horatia. " I know what you mean."

Claude Edmond sat down upon the grass at her feet. After a moment or two of silence he said with solemnity, " Ma tante, I will confide to you my great ambition. It is to grow up like Uncle Armand."

Horatia made a movement. " You should desire to resemble your father."

" But that goes without saying," returned the boy, rather shocked. " I meant, in outward things, voyez-vous. I desire to have the learning of Papa, and to be able to ride like Uncle Armand, to know about plants and flowers and books—yes, and perhaps about animals—and to be able to fence and shoot. . . ."

The child babbled on, but Horatia had fallen suddenly silent, and after a few moments, seeing her for once unresponsive, and mindful of having been warned by his father never to weary her, he tactfully announced that he would return to his attempts on the carp, and went off.

" I'll take the precious now, Mam, if you please," said Martha, bearing down on her mistress. " I don't want you to tire yourself, when you are getting some of your roses back again."

" Oh, I'm not tired," said Horatia smiling, but she kissed and surrendered her son, and having done so leant back in her chair and watched the distant figure of Claude-Edmond, in the eternally hopeful pose of the fisher, and trusted that he would not fall into the water.

It was true, she was not tired. Six weeks in the air of Plaisance had done wonders for her physical well-being. And something—could it have been the power of dulness ?—had healed her mind of much of its malady. She was young and healthy, and she no longer troubled to make herself remember that Maurice was Armand's son. Here he was hers.

No doubt of Armand's guilt ever entered her mind. But Claude-Edmond's words about him had roused a picture . . . Was it possible that she had behaved like a foolish girl ? She had often heard Aunt Julia say,

and had been irritated by the dictum, that a woman could make what she liked of her husband. And, though she had had everything in her favour, she had given up the attempt at the first difficulty. If he had gone straight to his mistress, it was largely her own fault.

But if she were regretting that she had not disputed with the Vicomtesse for Armand, that meant that Armand was worth fighting for, and over and over again she had told herself that he was nothing to her now. But was that quite true ? If it were, how was it that she scanned so eagerly what newspapers she could procure for accounts of the progress of the cholera in Paris ? His own short, polite notes to her told her little of it, but the sight of them stirred her, she could not quite say how.

Something else was stirring in her too. Suppose she had not merely acted foolishly, but wrongly ?

The feelings which had surprised her that morning in the Embassy Chapel had returned, but on a different plane. " We have erred and strayed . . . there is no health in us." What if the over-familiar words really had a meaning, what if she herself, who uttered them so often and so lightly, had actually done wrong, grave wrong ? This conviction grew in her. It was to Horatia the first vivid connection between the spiritual and material worlds, and was bringing her to the resolve that, when she returned, she would in some degree forgive Armand. She would admit that she had been a little hard. And the thought of this great concession pleased her ; being in the future, it took on something of the glamour of the noble things we mean to do one day.

(2)

A week later a letter from the Duchesse announced that it was safe for her and the children to return to Paris, where the scourge, though still present, seemed to have spent its force. So they went back.

An air of calamity still brooded over the capital, and as they stopped at the barrier Horatia shuddered to see the street urchins playing at "cholera morbus," dragging one of their companions, a simulated corpse, along the ground. But her mind, after all, was full of a more personal concern. As she drew nearer to the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon, as Claude-Edmond, looking out of the window of the post-chaise, announced, "Here we are in the Place Vendôme," or, "Now we are turning into the Rue de Rivoli," it did not seem so easy a matter to bestow a pardon to which the culprit might now be indifferent.

Emmanuel, not Armand, was on the steps to receive her. He came down and helped her to alight. Claude-Edmond flung himself into his father's arms. And all at once Horatia knew that she was bitterly hurt. That Armand should not care whether she returned or no was one thing; that he should affront her before her brother-in-law and the servants was quite another. Too proud to make any remark at the moment on his absence, she turned to busying herself over Maurice, but once inside she said to Emmanuel, as lightly as she could, "I suppose that Armand was not expecting me so early?"

The Marquis looked disconcerted. "My dear sister, has the letter not reached you? He went very suddenly, the day before yesterday, to join Madame in Vendée."

(3)

Not by the tragic words " Too late " was the situation thus created summed up in Horatia's mind, for she had never been able to take the Duchesse de Berry very seriously. And though she was told that the princess had undoubtedly landed near Marseilles one dark night at the end of April, the very fact that the conflagration in the South which was to spring up at her appearance absolutely failed to emit a single spark only confirmed the English girl in her conviction. Nor did Marie-Caroline's romantic journey in diguise to Vendée (now matter of knowledge in Royalist circles) impress Horatia; it seemed to her too much like Walter Scott to be quite real, and she could not fancy that there would be actual fighting round such a fantastic heroine. Emmanuel did not seem to think so, either; at any rate he took no rosy views of her chances. The Duchesse, on the other hand, was at once more sanguine and more alarming, continually preaching with a mixture of resignation and elation a sort of version of " Paris vaut une messe," thus conceived: "If Henri V. cannot be set on the throne without the life-blood of one of our family, then I am willing that it should be given." This attitude seemed to Horatia so uncalled for that it irritated rather than dismayed her. Nor could she help feeling a tinge of annoyance, even if she would not confess it, at the check given by Armand's absence to her plan of forgiveness, for now she could not set herself right with him. She must wait till his return.

Yet she had her hours of apprehension. As a fortnight, three weeks passed without news these grew more frequent. And at last, when the Republican riots of the 5th and 6th of June burst over Paris, what she heard of

the fierce street fighting, the stand at Saint-Merri, the eight hundred slain, brought home to her the political passions of the time with a horrible vividness, and she was at last nakedly afraid. The Duchesse, incurable Frondeuse that she was, was pleased at anything that shook or embarrassed the government, and declared that the news would be very encouraging to Madame's party.

When she made this declaration Madame's party as such no longer existed. Two days later, Horatia, having said good-night to Maurice, found Emmanuel, looking very grave, waiting for her in her boudoir.

"Horatia," he said, "we have news at last. The whole rising has failed. There have been several engagements, and Charette has been defeated. They are all scattered; it is a sauve qui peut. My grandmother does not know yet."

"And Armand?"

"We can only hope for the best. If he could cross the Loire he would go and lie hidden at Kerfontaine. He told me that before he went."

"There has been a battle, you say? But perhaps he was not in it . . . you do not even know that? . . . O Emmanuel, have you no news of him?"

"Absolutely none; it is impossible. We can only hope for the best, as I say. I think that if he is alive he will probably succeed in making his way up to Brittany."

"I must go down there," she said feverishly. "I must go at once. Emmanuel, you must help me!"

"My dear," said the Marquis, rather amazed, "you cannot do any good by going. Please God, Armand is alive. If he escapes, he escapes. . . . In any case your presence at Kerfontaine cannot help him."

"I must go," she repeated, twisting her hands to-

gether. " It is very important. Emmanuel, you said you would do anything for me. . . ." Her voice began to break.

Her brother-in-law did not fully understand, but he took her hands with his accustomed kindness, and said that if she wished it, she should go, and he would take her. And so, in spite of the vehement opposition of the Duchesse, who was quite broken down by the bad news, but who finally said, weeping, that they could at least bring back Armand's body if it was found, they started early next morning on the road to Chartres.

CHAPTER XXI

THERE had been a time when Armand de la Roche-Guyon had certainly not anticipated ever seeing Brittany again, yet here he was in Brittany after all.

When he left Paris in the middle of May he had gone straight down to join Charette in Vendée, for he wanted to offer his sword in person to Madame. He had done so; he had seen her, "Petit-Pierre," in her peasant boy's attire, gay and indomitable, and had kissed her hand in a farmhouse kitchen. Other young men like himself were there, full of hope and ardour; though even then it was beginning to be apparent that Vendée was not really ready to rise, and some of the chiefs did their utmost to dissuade the princess at the eleventh hour from the scheme. The fatal mistake was made of postponing the insurrection, already fixed for the 24th of May, by a counter order, circulated only two days beforehand. When the fourth of June came, much of the fervour of the peasants had evaporated and the Philippistes were on the alert. Nevertheless, two days afterwards, at the hamlet of Le Chêne, Armand had been one of the little band, only two hundred and twenty strong, who, splashing through the ford or firing (in the old manner) from behind the orchard hedges, had beaten off two bodies of Government troops, only to be routed by a third. Nor was theirs the only defeat. It was over, the chance of a restoration, and, disillusioned but unhurt, Armand had, with difficulty and danger, made his way across the Loire.

Yet for prudence' sake he had come back, not to Kerfontaine itself, but to the tiny shooting-box in the wood of St. Clair, and therein, this June evening, the day before Horatia's arrival at Kerfontaine, he lay at full length on a settle, his hands behind his head, and thoughtfully surveyed the unceiled rafters, where the twilight was beginning to weave a veil.

The shooting-box belonged to the château of St. Clair, and stood on the edge of a little clearing in the forest ; it consisted only of one room, but a portion had been partitioned off as a kitchen. Armand had known it full of sportsmen. On the table in the centre lay, at this moment, his pistols, in company with a half empty bottle of wine, a loaf of bread, and a ham ; for the place had been provisioned against his coming. He had kicked off his long boots, and flung his cloak on a chair. It was very odd to be, not only without a valet, but without a cook ; it did not amuse him, for he was both tired and bored. Already, since his arrival in the early morning, he was beginning to think his concealment absurd. He had heard vague rumours of the presence of soldiers, but since the nearest (and abortive) rising was twenty miles away, he was not disposed to believe them. At any rate, as soon as it was darker he was going to venture out.

For he was back near Laurence de Vigerie, and all that the past week had held of death and broken hopes was shrivelled up in that knowledge. She was at St. Clair, and they, who had never seen each other since the night when she had worn the tell-tale roses in the masquerade, would meet at last. No problematic peril was likely to keep him from her.

The cobwebs of twilight, dropping lower and lower from the rafters, began to reach the young man where

he lay on the settle. Surely he could go now. He pulled himself off the hard couch, drew on his boots, picked up his cloak, then, remembering prudence, removed, with visible annoyance, the remains of his meal, and, locking the door behind him, stepped out into the evening.

The wood was sinking into sleep. A gust of subtle, heady scent immediately assailed him, and he saw, on the other side of the little clearing by the hut, a thicket of tall elderbushes, intruders in the ranks of forest trees. The over-fragrant smell seemed to be blown after him down the twilight ride ; it was still in his nostrils when he came, twenty minutes later, on the great mass of the château of St. Clair. He jumped down into the fosse, climbed up on the other side, and began cautiously to make his way through the rose garden towards the one lighted window on the ground floor, a long window hung over only with some thin blind or curtain. It was that of Madame de Vigerie's smaller salon, and since there was a light she must be there. Probably, indeed, she was expecting him.

Had the window been open he might have walked in upon her, but since it was closed and he could not see through, she might not be alone. The traditional method of summons would serve him as well as any. He caught up a handful of gravel from the path and flung it sharply against the glass. Almost immediately the light within was extinguished ; then a hasp was heard to turn, and the window opened outward, the panes shimmering a little in the dim light. A figure slipped out.

" Who is it ? " asked Madame de Vigerie. But there was that in her voice which made the question unnecessary.

Armand gave no answer at all, but taking a step or

two forward, caught both her hands. Then, with a sob of laughter, she was in his arms, and he was kissing her lips, her hair. . . . Was she not given back to him from the grave?

In a little they were wandering among the dew-drenched roses. Roses and nightingales after the reddened swamps of Le Chêne—it was like a dream. For he, too, had been through his baptism of fire, and bore the singe of it, to make him for the moment to the woman by his side what he had never been before—stronger than she.

"You are at the shooting-box, then?" she said at last. "It is well provisioned? I gave orders."

"It wants only one thing."

"What is that?"

"You."

"I cannot come there," said Madame de Vigerie.

"Not now, I know. I would not ask it. But to-morrow . . . in the afternoon, when the sun is getting low, you will come . . . ?"

She did not answer, but he could feel her tremble.

"I am starving, Laurence. If anyone should see you, it is easy to explain. I am a fugitive—you are a conspirator, too."

"I was not counting *that* cost," she said in a low voice. "O Armand, Armand, why will you not go away and leave me in peace!"

"Because, at last, you love me."

And she made no denial, but breaking from his hold, stood in the midst of the roses with her face in her hands.

"There is the nightingale," said Armand softly. "It sings for us. There are no nightingales in the forest, nor roses. But if you came to me there, Laurence, in the little hut, it would not lack either. O my world, my

rose . . . I have waited so long, so patiently! . . . Has not death itself spared us for this . . . ?"

Half an hour later he was groping his way across the hut. It was foolish to strike a light, so, wrapping himself in his cloak, he lay down in the dark on the settle. But his brain was on fire, and phantasmagoric figures danced before his eyes—Charette, and the little princess in her boy's clothes, and he heard himself saying, as he had said to Marie-Caroline, when he had kissed that royal, adventurous hand, "I would gladly die for you, Madame." But in the half-dream Madame had the face of Laurence de Vigerie.

He came back from it. The settle was confoundedly hard, as hard as a coffin. Then he remembered having seen, lying dead on a couch just like this, in a peasant's cottage at Le Chêne, before the engagement began, a young man shot by an Orleanist patrol. He had been sorry for him then; he was sorrier now, for perhaps the blood had once raced and pounded in his veins as now in his own, and he, too, had thought, perhaps, "To-morrow! to-morrow. . . ."

(2)

That night, the last of her journey, the cloud of apprehension lifted from Horatia's mind, and sitting by her window in the inn at Ploërmel, she had a clear conviction that Armand was alive, and had escaped from Vendée. She would not be too late. She would forgive him; she would even ask him to forgive her the hardness she had shown him. And—who knew—they might perhaps take up their life together again where it had been broken off, for she had experience now.

But who knows when the cup of experience is fully drained ?

When Kerfontaine came in sight next morning she could hardly control herself. Would he have had any word of her approach ; was he there at all ? . . .

" Yes, we know for certain that M. le Comte has escaped from Vendée, praise the saints," said old Jean to Horatia and Emmanuel. " But he has not been here, and we think he is probably in hiding in the wood for a day or two. Then he will come here. It was arranged so."

" He might come any time—to-day even ? "

" Yes, Madame la Comtesse, any time, when it is safe. And M. le Comte was never one to be over-cautious."

" But there are no soldiers about here, surely ? " asked Emmanuel.

" We have not seen any, Monsieur le Marquis, but there are reported to be some in Pontivy."

Emmanuel drew his sister-in-law aside. " I think I will ride over to Pontivy," he said, " and see if I can get any information. I am not known in these parts, and I may be able to find out something."

So, after déjeuner, he set out. The afternoon crawled slowly on. Horatia went over the château, most of which was shut up. The nurseries were still unfurnished, and behind the screen which she and Claude-Edmond had made a year ago she found a heap of dusty pictures and a pot with dried relics of paste. After supper she sat in the salon. The suspense was beginning to tell on her—not the suspense about Armand's safety, for as he had succeeded in getting away from Vendée he must be out of danger now—but the suspense about his entrance. At any moment he might come in. Would he be sur-

prised to see her there? She could not picture their meeting; she would not try to; she must trust that with the moment would come the right words.

About nine o'clock she wandered out into the hall. What time would Emmanuel be back? The sardonic smile of the ancestress over the hearth followed her, as on that night when Armand had lain there, his head on her knee, and she had hoped to be the first to die. Nothing now could ever restore the perfume of that rapture; but the broken vase, which once held it, might yet be pieced together. . . .

. . . Surely that was a horse's hoofs in the avenue, the hoofs of a horse approaching at breakneck pace. If it was Emmanuel he evidently had important news. Horatia ran to the door and opened it herself. A mounted man was tearing up between the trees, had flung himself off his panting horse and dashed up the steps, a little square of white in his hand.

"For Madame la Comtesse de la Roche-Guyon," he said, thrusting it into her hold. "Give it to her at once!" And she was aware that he wore Madame de Vigerie's livery. How strange; she had not known that she was here!

She read the letter in the hall. It was very short. When she had done so she put her hands over her eyes, read it again, and hurried to the bell-pull.

"Jean," she said, "order the carriage at once! I am going to St. Clair. There is not a moment to lose. . . . Give this letter to Monsieur le Marquis directly he returns."

(3)

It was six o'clock in the evening of the longest day that Armand de la Roche-Guyon had ever spent. He

had hardly slept all night; at dawn he had risen and gone out, but since that time he had been a self-constituted prisoner. If, at any time, there was risk in his being seen—which he could not bring himself to believe—that risk was much greater in the day-time. Besides, he had Laurence to think of.

So he sat before the fireless hearth, he paced up and down, he flung himself on the settle, he examined over and over again all the heads of beasts upon the walls, the only ornaments of the place. The hut was very tidy, but he could not deck it as befitted the guest. He had told her last night that there were no roses, but it now occurred to him that he might at least have gathered this morning a branch of something green and living—a branch, for instance, of the flowering elder just outside. Thinking of these bushes, but without any intention of going out to rifle them, his restless feet carried him to the little half-shuttered window. Yes, there they stood, with their broad flat masses of blossom. How strong the scent had been last night! She would smell it as she came; she would hear the birds beginning their vespers. This golden sun would shine on her; would she ride or walk?

Leaning idly by the window, Armand looked at his watch. Half an hour still. He glanced at the elder-bushes again . . . and suddenly even Laurence was forgotten, and the little trees were everything in the world to him. For among the leaves he had caught sight of a leaf of other kind, thin and shining. It was a bayonet.

Armand stood a moment incapable of thought or movement. Then the truth stabbed him with a cold and sickening pang. He looked again. Further along

they had scarcely troubled to take cover ; he could see the uniforms among the tree-trunks. He went a little white round the mouth, and moving away sank into a chair by the table and hid his face in his hands.

What he had thought so absurd, so incredible, had happened ! He had been tracked or betrayed, and they were waiting to shoot him as he came out. They did not mean to force an entrance, that was obvious, or they would have done so by now. They had no intention, the careful Philippistes, of running any risks. They would wait there in ambush until he came out. . . .

. . . Or till he came in. It might be that they were watching for his entrance, not knowing that he was there already. And that was, after all, a more likely explanation of their present inaction. More than that, it gave him a chance, a feeble glimmering chance, for his life. It was just conceivable that, seeing no one enter, they would go away without searching the hut. It was a chance, a chance . . . O God ! it was a chance. . . .

But even as his mind caught at that slender hope, embracing it fiercely, the very heart in his body stopped beating. *Seeing no one enter!* Why, in half an hour Laurence would come along the clearing, and then . . . He heard the report, saw her writhing on the ground. . . Why should they hesitate because she was a woman, the men who could shoot a girl of sixteen in cold blood. She was a Carliste. It might even be she that they were expecting.

Armand raised his face, grown old and haggard. On him lay the burden of her coming there ; it was for him to avert, if by any means he could, so horrible a thing. They must be sent away before she came. And there was only one way of doing that. It might not be

successful. That he would never know. But he had to do it ; he had to do it.

He pressed his hands tightly round his head, where the whirling thoughts drove like bees, and where the remembrance of Horatia, and his courtship, and Maurice, and the consciousness of the sunshine outside, the knowledge that in an incredibly short space of time he would lie out in it and neither feel nor see it, clear and vehement in themselves, were all subordinated to a vision of Laurence coming along the forest path. He looked once more at his watch. Twenty-five minutes—not a second to lose, since they must be gone some distance before she came, and they would probably spend some time in searching his body and the hut before they left. His brain had suddenly become as clear as ice. He stood up, turned out his pockets, put his money and watch on the table, took up his pistols, which were loaded ; then laid them down again. It would waste time, and be quite useless. For a moment more he stood looking round the room which had been so irradiated by the thought of her presence, where—it was his last prayer—she would never come now.

And then, since with whatever of less worthy commingled, there ran in his veins the blood of a long line that had never stayed for mortal peril, Armand de la Roche-Guyon set his teeth, and, opening the door, walked out to death.

* * * * *

The two wood pigeons on the roof, who had been frightened away by the noise of the volley, had returned, and their sleepy, liquid notes melted into the peace of the summer afternoon as Madame de Vigerie came riding in her green amazone through the wood. As the hut came into sight she dropped into a walk. At first she

merely noticed, though with an instant surprise, that the door stood open.

But her horse knew, before she did, and stopped, trembling. Laurence de Vigerie gave a broken scream, and put her hands instinctively over her eyes. The next moment she had slid to the ground, and catching up the folds of her long habit, was running to him.

Armand lay face downwards on the woodland grass, about ten paces from the open door, in an attitude not wholly unlike a sleeper's. Except by one shoulder, there was little sign of blood, till, tugging at him, she had turned him over. But his head, when she raised it, fell back inert on her arm, the face uninjured, but of a mortal greyness, the half open eyes rolled upwards almost out of sight. A thin scarlet stream had trickled down from one corner of his mouth; his right hand clutched a tuft of grass. Three or four patches of wet blood on his clothes, his left sleeve, soaked from shoulder to wrist—the arm was broken and the hand shot through—and the one pool on the ground which was already crimsoning her habit, were more than enough to show her what had happened. Yet she tore off his neck-cloth and unfastened his coat and shirt before she knew, shuddering, that here was ruin beyond human repairing. And she caught the riddled body in her arms, crying to him, kissing him, while the pigeons cooed in the sun, and, to windward of the evidence of slaughter, her horse grazed reassured.

CHAPTER XXII

THE brilliance of the hall at St. Clair dazzled Horatia. Someone took her gently by the arm, and led her up the great staircase into a little room full of books. Not till she got there did she realise even the sex of the person, and found that her conductor was a grey-haired man.

" Madame," he said, " I am the surgeon, and I must tell you the truth . . . if you are strong enough to bear it ? "

" I am strong enough," said Horatia.

" Your husband is dying. He was shot by the Philippistes in the forest about six this evening ; he was found an hour later unconscious but alive, and brought here as soon as possible. But—I should be doing you a great injury to deceive you—he cannot live till morning. . . . Will you see him now ? "

" Can't you do *anything* ? " asked Horatia, passionately.

He shook his head. " It is a miracle that he is still alive, Madame—with eight bullet wounds. Madame de Vigerie did not know that you were here ; as soon as she heard she sent for you." He paused at the door, and looking at her with the same stern pity, said, " Remember, Madame, if he talks wildly, that he is still in great pain. I have given him what opiates I dared, but they have little effect, I fear. He will know you now, but later on he may become delirious, so that you should see him at once. There is nothing to do ;

only do not lift him up. I shall be outside the door, within call." He preceded her out of the room.

A priest was going down the stairs—the old curé who had given them his blessing. Where was Madame de Vigerie ?

She forgot to think of her when she was inside. Was that really Armand ? All the shadows in the big, lofty room seemed centred in his face, so sharp and incredibly grey against the white of the bed-linen. He lay on his back in the great sculptured bed ; one pillow only out of its many supported him ; the rest had been thrown in a heap on the floor. His eyes were closed ; he had only a sheet over him, and under it his motionless body had a sinister rigidity. A table with basins, with cloths and lint trailing over it had been pushed, only half out of sight, behind a curtain, and a chair near it bore his blood-soaked clothes, cast there just as they had been cut off him.

She saw all these details, grasped their full meaning, but had thought only for one thing, and going round the foot of the bed, entered the sanctuary of the screen that kept off the candle-light. Armand's right hand, the fingers twitching a little, lay on the edge of the bed. Horatia fell on her knees beside him.

And Armand opened dark, misty eyes upon her. He seemed to consider for a moment, and then there came about his ashen lips a phantom of the smile that had once charmed her, and he lifted his hand a little way, pointing.

" Your hair . . . makes a light," he said faintly. The candles were behind her.

" Armand——" she began, choking.

" Yes," he said with more strength, " I know. It is . . . a long business, it seems. They do not shoot

very straight, the Orleanists . . . I should like to see you better . . . if you would move a candle . . . Merci." He relapsed into French. "My dear, you would make a beautiful angel, you who believe in the angels. I shall not see a fairer . . . Oh, do not be anxious; M. le Curé . . . has arranged all that."

She saw now that he was in deadly pain, and the bantering words went past her in a passion of pity and remorse. Her scalding tears fell on his cold hand, and on her own, that clasped it.

"Armand, Armand, forgive me!"

"Ma chère, for what? I thought it was to be . . . the other way." A little tortured laugh came from him. "You, to make the . . . the conventional death-bed scene! Was that why . . . you came all this distance?"

"I came when I heard that the rising had failed . . . when I thought . . . O Armand, cannot *something* be done!"

"You were really too kind, mon amie. It is such a long way . . . Did you have a . . . good journey?"

"Armand, for God's sake!" cried Horatia, agonised at the tone. But he had closed his eyes again; perhaps he did not even hear her. And lying there helpless, broken, ghastly, he was suddenly once more all that he had ever been to her—the lover, triumphant and adorable, who had kissed her in the field of stubble, the married lover of those days in Brittany . . . But it was too late now, she saw that; not only too late to save his body, but to make any appeal to the spirit that was leaving it. The time for that was past.

He spoke again, without opening his eyes, very faintly but just as politely. "That glass on the table . . . if I might trouble you . . ." When she stooped over him with it she remembered the doctor's injunc-

tion, and, slipping her hand with all possible precaution under his head, raised it only a little way. Even at that movement a contraction passed over his face, and he shut his teeth on a groan. Then he drank, and she lowered his head to the pillow. She longed to touch his hair again, and dared not.

"Thank you," said Armand, and lay silent for a moment, the sweat gathering on his forehead. Then, with an effort, he began again. "I should like, . . . while I can . . . to speak about the boy. . . . Perhaps . . . an English school . . . I believe I put that. . . in my will the other day . . . but I cannot remember. . . . He will be like . . . you . . . when he grows up."

"Oh, I hope not!" was torn, in a whisper, from Horatia.

The expressive eyebrows lifted a fraction. "Mais . . . you surely . . . do not wish him . . . like . . . me . . . And you . . . will marry again, ma chère . . . you might marry ce bon Tristan . . ."

Another pause; and his voice had grown almost inaudible when he added, "I would give you my . . . benediction, the benediction . . . of a ghost . . . It is not long ago . . . you told me I . . . I did not exist . . . you had the gift . . . of prophecy . . ."

This time the pause was longer still. At the foot of the bed, where his last speech had cast her, Horatia was pressing a handful of the sheet against her mouth, lest she should cry out in her own pain. She did not know whether she was saying anything; only she was aware of the thought that these were perhaps the last words she should ever hear from him . . .

Suddenly, however, quite changed in tone, the voice said—and she was not sure whether it was addressing

her or someone else, "Mais, voyez-vous, I am not at all content to be a ghost . . . at my age . . . except that it is the only way . . . to be rid of these damnable bullets . . . But if the curé tells you that I was resigned . . . do not believe him . . ."

And with these words, in which youth and strength and the soul which had so lightly companioned them, made their last protest against the wrecking of their habitation, Armand de la Roche-Guyon's head rolled slowly over to one side.

(2)

The next thing that Horatia knew was that, somehow, the surgeon was in the room again, bending over the bed. "I expected this," she heard him mutter. Then he turned to her abruptly.

"He has only fainted," he said. "He must have tried to move. I shall not revive him, Madame; it is cruel kindness." He stood a moment looking down at the unconscious face. "Poor boy," he added to himself, "he will not die easily. . . . Now, Madame, I think you had better come away. He will not know you again, I think, and I will stay with him."

"No, no!" exclaimed Horatia, clinging to the pillar of the bed as if she feared to be removed by force. "I will stay—I insist—it is my right! He is quite quiet; I will call you if I need you. Be outside the door! I must stay!"

So he went, and, sitting there, Horatia began her vigil. It was very still. Breaths of the scented June night, poignant of jasmine, came now and then through the open windows, and stirred the candle-flames. For a long time Armand lay without moving; she could

only hear his difficult breathing. The screen by the bed was worked with landscapes in silk, autumn scenes of bright brown, amber and gold, like the trees under which they had first met . . . But between that first meeting and this—— How could it be that life was so shorn across? She had pictured long years of estrangement, or, perhaps, years when after forgiving him she had tried with a heavy heart to do her duty—and there was this instead. O, if God would only give her those imagined years! And forgiveness—what had that word to do here. . . .

And suddenly in the garden a nightingale began to sing, and that magic voice, with all its thrilling burden of pain and passion, the voice which can never be heard without a stirring of the heart, pierced her like a sword. Crouching down in the chair, her arms across her face to stifle the sound, she wept.

She did not weep for long. As if the bird, or her sobs, had roused him, Armand was drifting back to consciousness; she heard him moan. She sprang up. She would have given everything in the world to speak to him again, but she did not want him to come back to bodily anguish. "Armand, do not wake!" she whispered, the tears streaming down her face. "Sleep, my darling, sleep; do not wake again!" With all her will she strove to push him back; and since he was hers more certainly in unconsciousness, since he could not look at her now with eyes that held mockery and too much remembrance, she bent and kissed him many times, and her tears fell on his hair.

It was vain, for another phantom was flitting before him in the mists of death, drawing him from peace. In a little she knew it. "Laurence, why do you not come?" he began, restlessly, and went on begging her at one

moment to disregard her scruples, at another not to leave him to die alone, since he had give his life for her. And Horatia, kneeling, frozen, by the bed, learnt from the broken, pregnant sentences all the truth. Whatever his desires, he had never been Laurence's lover. She had to believe him now. Her own name was mingled in the stream. "Horatia does not believe me," said the failing voice. "Leave your scruples, Laurence; she does not believe me." And again, "Why do you send for Horatia? She would not care . . . I am nothing to her now . . . she told me so."

But chiefly, and with a growing and dangerous agitation, he implored Laurence to come to him, seeming to imagine that he was lying in the wood, that it was dark, and that she would not come. Hardly knowing what she said, stunned by the revelations which at the moment she was not able fully to grasp, Horatia tried to soothe him, calling upon him by all the names of their brief happiness; but to all her efforts he merely responded by crying more insistently for Laurence, Laurence, Laurence, till the name seemed to eat into her brain in letters of fire. At last, at the end of endurance, she got up from the bedside and went dizzily towards a window, towards the air. That Madame de Vigerie's presence might really have power to quiet him never occurred to her; she was too agonised for thought.

Until that moment Armand had not betrayed the slightest consciousness of her, looking always with haunted eyes beyond her for the figure which was not there. But directly she moved away a change came over him, and he seemed suddenly enveloped by a cloud from the past thicker than those in which he wandered. He began to struggle.

"Let me go to her—she is dying . . . they have shut the door and will not let me in. Let me go, Emmanuel! I tell you she is dying . . . and she was wearing my flowers . . ."

He tried, ineffectually, to raise himself in the bed, and as Horatia hurried towards him there sprang out on the white sheet, just over his breast, a little crimson patch. For the second or two that she stared at it, terrified, it grew larger, bright and menacing. Gasping, she ran to the door and flung it open, expecting to find the surgeon outside. There was no one there.

To get help, from any quarter, was the sole clamorous idea in Horatia's brain. Opposite her was a door; light streamed from beneath it. In an instant she was across the landing, and had opened it. Only then did she realise whose room she had entered.

Madame de Vigerie was sitting motionless, relaxed, in a chair by the elaborate bed. She had the air of having sat thus for hours. She was still in her riding-habit, stiff, in one place, with Armand's blood; her head was thrown back against the rose-coloured satin of the hangings.

"You must come at once!" cried Horatia. "He is dying!"

Madame de Vigerie rose stiffly, as if she were cramped; her face was absolutely colourless and almost without expression.

"Go back," she said dully. "It is your place. I have no right there."

Horatia fell on her knees, sobbing out, "For God's sake, come! You do not understand—I implore you, I, his wife . . . I think a wound has opened . . . blood . . ."

A noisy darkness came down on her ; she sank sideways to the floor.

* * * * *

Did it really happen, or was it a vision ? She seemed to be back in the room where Armand had taken his farewell of life. It was very quiet now. The oasis of candle-light at the far side of the bed was beginning to be flooded out by the cold waves of dawn ; the first birds were already chirping. Armand was where he had craved to be, for Madame de Vigerie had him in her arms. She had lifted him away from the pillow, and his head was lying back on her shoulder. Laurence de Vigerie's own head was bent ; she did not move either, but there was that in her attitude which was piercingly maternal—the mother, not the lover, with her dead. For that Armand was gone Horatia was instinctively sure. Billows of mist broke over her, and she seemed to fall . . .

(3)

Long, long afterwards—and yet she knew that it was only next morning—Horatia stood by Emmanuel's side and looked down at what had been Armand. She had shrunk a little from going in, remembering the gloomy catafalque at St. Germain l'Auxerrois, and fearing the sable French palls besprinkled with tears and skulls. It was hard to associate things like that with Armand. She need not have been afraid. The windows were closely curtained, and there were great candles burning at the foot of the bed, and between them a prie-dieu, but nothing of gloom. Even the conventional white flowers were not there ; for Horatia slowly realised, with an under-current of wonder, that

the spotless drapery of the bed was splashed with trails and mounds of crimson roses.

And Armand lay in the midst of them indifferent and serene, all the traces of his difficult dying smoothed away, the shadow of a smile round his mouth—but as far removed from the lover and husband she had known as from the tortured stranger of last night. The fingers of his uninjured right hand, which alone lay on his breast, held, not the usual crucifix, but a tiny sprig of laurel. Only she who had put it there, and she who now gazed at it, knew why.

The candles were blurred in tears. Emmanuel stooped and kissed the tranquillised dead face.

"Sleep well, my brother," he whispered, using the words he had uttered, with a different thought, not long ago.

Horatia slipped to her knees, and her head sank forward among the roses.

BOOK III

BOOK III

LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT

CHAPTER I

(1)

THE strains of the violin lingered and died away in the October twilight, and the musician, sitting on the deep window-seat of Dormer's rooms at Oriel, took the instrument from under his chin.

"Go on," said his listener, who lay full length on the sofa. But the player shook his head.

"Music is the worst trade under the sun in a blow-up," he observed. "The lyre is only heard in feasts."

Dormer moved. "My dear fellow, you sound gloomy! The present is not a feast, granted, but neither is it a blow-up."

John Henry Newman said nothing, but, with a little sigh, laid the violin and the bow carefully on the window-seat. The fading light gleamed for a moment on his tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles, and threw up, as he turned, the great nose and the rather prominent underlip of his lean face.

"I could wish, after all," he said, "that I had not fallen in with the Froudes' plan. I do not really want to leave England just now. I grudge the time, the expense, the trouble. Then suppose I were to fall ill, too. It is quite enough that Hurrell should be an

invalid. And yet I suppose it may be a duty to consult for one's health, to enlarge one's ideas, to break one's studies, and to have the name of a travelled man."

"Yet a few weeks ago," commented Dormer, undisturbed, "you seemed pleased about it."

"So I was; in fact, the prospect fairly unsettled me. I remember feeling quite ashamed to be so excited, for it showed me how little real stability of mind I had yet attained.—But I shall go, of course, when term is over."

"It will do you good, now that the Arians are off your hands," said Dormer—"provided that you don't meet with a mishap like mine. Still more, must we hope, will it do Froude good."

"Indeed, we must hope that," answered Froude's friend very gravely, and in the darkening room the shadow of a great apprehension seemed to float for a moment between the two men.

"I wish I were not going to be away from England when the Reformed Parliament meets," resumed the silver-clear voice. "Reform apparently connoting nowadays change at any price, without regard to its direction, we need have no delusions that the threats against the Church which have been dinned into our ears for so long will not be put into execution. I know that Keble is preaching the duty of passivity for us clergy until the Liturgy itself is actually attacked, but if that is what he is waiting for, I don't think he will have to wait long. Revenues to-day, creeds to-morrow. I really incline to the hope that the Whig spirit will keep in, and the Church be set adrift. If this were the case we should be so very independent of things temporal, for we only, as individuals, should suffer."

"You will probably be confirmed in that hope, then," remarked his friend, "when you get abroad and see

with your own eyes, as I did, the whole Western Catholic world suffering from the same lack of power because it has compromised with the State for the sake of its endowments."

"That was what struck you in Italy?"

"That, and the infidelity of most of the thinking laity."

"It seems sometimes," said Newman despondently, "as if the gift of truth once lost was lost for ever, and that, with so much infidelity and profaneness, the whole world is tending towards some dreadful crisis."

"Yes," said Dormer, "one is rather tempted to think so sometimes. But perhaps that feeling is an incentive, if we needed one, to set our own house in order."

Newman sighed. "I do believe what you say, in my heart, but there are times, as you know, when it looks as if the Almighty had forsaken His habitation."

Dormer got off the sofa, and came and sat down by him on the window-seat. "You know that you do not really think that, Neander. You are only tired and overworked. I will show you that you don't think it. What was it that you wrote to me in July when the cholera was at its worst here? You said, if I remember rightly, that one's time had come, or it had not come, and that in your case you were sure that it had not, because you felt you were destined for some work which you had not yet accomplished. Do you remember writing that?"

Looking at him, Newman seemed to rouse himself. "I do remember. It was a strong impression that I had just after the fatal case of cholera at Littlemore. I know that a strong impression is not a good argument, yet I have the feeling still at times. But why do you ask me?"

"Because what you feel about yourself—and feel, I am convinced, most rightly—I feel about the English Church. I think that God, instead of leaving His sanctuary, is about to come into it with power. I think that this will mean purgation and suffering for all of us, but that we have deserved. Do you remember the profession of faith that Bishop Ken made in his will?"

"No, I was not brought up on Ken; as I know you were."

"Well, I know it by heart," said Dormer. "'I die in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Faith, professed by the whole Church before the disunion of East and West, more particularly I die in the communion of the Church of England as it stands distinguished from all papal and puritan innovations, and as it adheres to the doctrine of the Cross.' That seems to me to be not only a profession of belief, but a vision of what the Church of England might be if she awoke to the knowledge of what it is really to possess the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Faith."

"Yes, it is a vision, and a 'vision splendid,'" assented Newman, "but—since I have used the phrase—you know how Mr. Wordsworth continues, how—

> 'At length the man perceives it die away
> And fade into the light of common day.'"

"It has not really faded; it cannot fade. It is our eyes that have forgotten how to look at it. No," went on Dormer with a sudden smile, "I would rather think that the vision seems to have faded because its guardians have shrouded it up, and then gone to sleep."

"You think, then," said Newman, with an answering smile, "that it is for us to wake them up?"

"Yes," confessed his friend, "or, if that is impossible, to break through ourselves and unveil the vision."

"Sometimes you remind me of Froude," said Newman musingly, "except that he has more of the schoolboy about him. . . . I think you have the real light, and I only a glimmer that comes and goes, and gives me just enough guidance for the day's journey and no more. . . . But as to these slumbering guardians," he continued, rousing himself from his own reflections, "have you ever thought any more about that idea of yours, the publishing something in a cheap short form—a sort of tracts—to stir people up?"

"No," said Dormer, "I made a present of it to you. In fact I have been wondering if you had thought of it again. It's not in my line, you know."

"My dear fellow, what nonsense! Yes, it did occur to me the other day how it would be exactly the kind of thing that a group of friends like ourselves might manage very well—sharpshooting, as it were. I will talk seriously of it to Froude when we meet. I have another scheme, however, that is more feasible at present. Now that Rose has started the 'British Magazine' I thought we might have a poetical section in it to rouse people to realise that there is a crisis. I am going to look for recruits. We will get Keble to write for it, of course, and you and I, and Isaac Williams, and I shall enlist Rogers if I can—and what about your friend Hungerford?"

"Tristram may have his faults," said Dormer, laughing, "but of the crime of writing verses he is, so far as I know, absolutely guiltless."

"Oh, anybody can write verses," pronounced Newman cheerfully, taking up his violin.

When Newman had gone Dormer lit a lamp and sat down to his translation of Andrewes (having the habit

of forcing himself, regardless of his own inclinations, to work at stated hours). But he had not got very far before he suddenly pushed books and papers away, and flinging out his arms on the table, buried his face in them. How dared he think that he was worthy to set his hand to the unveiling of that shrouded vision! And yet, and yet . . .

Later, he was standing looking out of the window across the dark quadrangle, where, against a clear sky already pierced with one or two stars, Merton tower lifted its crown of pinnacles. He felt rather lonely, and wished that Tristram would come in. But Tristram was in London. Then he remembered, with pleasure, that they would meet to-morrow at Compton, where he himself was going over to preach for Mr. Grenville, and where Tristram also had arranged to spend a couple of nights on his homeward journey to Oxford.

He went back to his writing-table, but he was still thinking of the same person. Since Tristram, having yielded to Keble's and Newman's wish that he should not leave Oxford, was working in the parish of S. Thomas's he had taken his place naturally among the little group of Oriel friends. Yet, in spite of all this, Dormer felt that somehow or other he knew less about him. He could not but observe that he seemed happier and more settled, and when, after the death of Horatia's husband, he heard him discussing with Froude the idea of a college of unmarried priests he was not so very greatly surprised. He wished that Tristram would talk sometimes about his own affairs, but he would comfort himself with the thought that Tristram could always now, if he desired it, have access to that guide and inspiration of them all, John Keble.

CHAPTER II

(1)

A SORT of holiday feeling not very difficult to account for enveloped Tristram Hungerford as he walked over the Downs this September afternoon with his face set towards Compton Regis. His short sojourn in London with relatives of his father's had made him feel, as usual, the gulf between himself and these good and pious people, which had sprung into existence when he was sent to a public school, had widened when he went to Oxford, and was now fairly yawning that he had become a High Churchman. It was not unnatural that he should look forward to his stay, with Dormer, in a more congenial atmosphere, rather as a schoolboy looks forward to an exeat, and it chimed with his mood that he must leave the coach at Lambourn and walk to Compton over the Downs. It was good to have the short springy grass once more underfoot, to breathe again that light intoxicating air, to see the great rolling distances which had been his inheritance since boyhood. Oxford and work were good, but this was good too.

Tristram had been rather happy these last months, for Keble had told him that, contrary to what he himself felt, he had much to offer, and so at his ord nation as deacon he at last took the step from which only an obstinate humility had been holding him back, and, in his own mind, dedicated himself to the single life.

He had also been very busy. St. Thomas's, the most populous and the most degraded parish in Oxford, lay, a beggar full of sores, almost at the gates of Christ Church, in whose gift was the living. Its incumbent, who was also precentor of the Cathedral, did not reside in the parish ; indeed it would have been hard to find, in that huddle of old houses, a suitable dwelling. Dirt, squalor, and vice reigned everywhere. The little twelfth century church, dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury, was damp and in ill-repair, though it had recently been repewed; during the flood its aisle was often under water. It was opened only for service on Sundays. Tristram Hungerford resolved that there should be a parson in the parish, and, letting his house at Compton Parva, he took rooms in Hollybush Row, undismayed by the open ditch which ran along in front of his window. His coming was not looked upon with favour in a district given over to thieves and prostitutes. It was not without considerable personal risk that he visited the narrow winding passages between the dirty old seventeenth century houses ; the men who lurked there regarded him as a spy, the women screamed abuse. He was more than once warned of plans to set on him some dark night. The warning had only the effect of making him more determined to remain where he was ; he had no objection at all to the idea of a scuffle, and it may have been this evident readiness, joined to the appearance which he bore of being a man of his hands, which secured him against actual molestation.

He had also another ally, the cholera, which, starting in June with two fatal cases at the Castle gaol, in the parish of St. Thomas's itself, swept the south-west quarter of Oxford before it migrated to the north-west, and the suburb of St. Clement's. For the last three

months Tristram had been to the district doctor, nurse —and friend.

And was it, he sometimes wondered, because he moved daily in activity and peril, or was he so profoundly changed that the news of Armand's death—amazing in its sudden tragedy—had so little effect upon him? He was indeed deeply grieved for Horatia. He thought of her as heart-broken. For after he had seen her in Paris he had come definitely to the conclusion, already dawning on him there, that the change in her was not due in any way to Armand, but to her new relatives. He still had an uneasiness for which he could not account, but Mr. Grenville having, by the exercise of great discretion and self-restraint, kept Horatia's secret, there was nothing to make him suspect the real state of affairs. Hence when, only about a fortnight ago, the Rector had suddenly told him most of the truth about Armand he was divided between anger and pity, but the revelation did not seem to affect him personally. He was curiously absorbed in his work ; since his services during the cholera he had been very differently received in the dens of St. Thomas's, and had even had a transient success when, (encouraged by the fact that during the epidemic the Senior Proctor had provided daily Morning and Evening Prayer in the House of Observation in St. Aldate's), he began to read it in the church, hoping that it might attract those who had escaped or recovered from the scourge. At first he had a sprinkling of people, then two or three, then he read the service in an echoing silence, but, having begun, he continued to read it.

He nourished indeed a hope that one day this little fast-closed church, named for an English saint, and so

typically English with its quiet graveyard and its ancient yew, might mean something to those who lived round it, that it might be a home to them, like the always-open churches he had seen in Italy. More, having now a practical experience of the bitter spiritual needs of the poor in a small neglected town parish, he indulged sometimes in what he felt to be an almost chimerical vision, of a church, spacious and beautiful as it might be, set in some great manufacturing town where life was thickly pent and had no hope or outlet—a church for the poor, served by the poor. When he was tired, which was not unseldom, he used to think of this dream structure of his, even picturing some of its architectural details. Of late he had admitted Dormer to the same occupation, and though to the latter the grimy surroundings of the imaginary fabric were clearly not an attraction, as they were to its original designer, the idea gained substance from his participation in it. Having ruled out galleries, family pews and the Royal arms, settled that the holy table should not only be fenced off from desecration, but that it should be restored to the position at present usurped by the pulpit, they—or rather Dormer—had even gone so far as to decide on the dedication. Hence at this very moment, while his eyes were fixed on a great white bastion of cloud rising exultant over the sky-line, Tristram was thinking that if his dining-room table at Compton, relic of the solid hospitality of Clapham days, was to be used in the refectory of the attached college of priests, the said college would have to be built on a more generous scale than Dormer seemed to think necessary; he should tell him so this evening. It would be a waste to sell that table.

He began to walk faster, exulting in the wind that resisted him, in the song of the larks above him, in the great cloud, in the wonderful feeling both of loneliness and of life at the highest pitch. Scraps of that incomparable Te Deum, the hundred and forty-eighth Psalm, came into his mind—" Praise the Lord upon earth, ye dragons and all deeps; fire and hail, snow and vapours; wind and storm, fulfilling his word; mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars . . ."

At this point he perceived, rather to his astonishment, that he was not alone upon the Downs. About a quarter of a mile off two people had emerged upon the smooth curve of the hill that rose before him, walking swiftly, a sheep-dog heralding their way. They must have come up by the old track in the hollow to have remained hidden until that moment, thought Tristram as he idly watched them. They were too far off for him to see anything distinctive; he could make no guess at their identity, only, by their movements, they were young, and they were man and woman. But as he looked a curious interest seized upon him. It seemed to him almost as if the pulsing life around had centred in these two figures, instinct with joy and youth.

They reached the summit of the hill. A lark rose in the sky, a tiny speck against the cloud; the wind fluttered the woman's dress. Suddenly they stopped, turned, and kissed each other. There was no trace of courting or of timidity in the action; it was beautiful and fitting, as though the sun and wind had met together and praised God for the fulness of joy. The dog leapt round them barking. In another instant they were walking on as quickly as before, till they were swallowed up in a dip of the Downs.

Tristram had stopped too. In less time than it takes

a pebble to fall from a cliff, the sun, the wind, the clouds, the very grass were clothed in a new significance. This, the close of the great Psalm, this was the highest thing that existence had to offer, and he was putting it by—he was putting by deliberately, with the hand of a madman, the draught which it was no longer sin to contemplate. Those two figures! He flung himself down on the ground, the lark's song beating in his brain, and prayed passionately to know the same joy before life was done.

(2)

Two hours later, as he drew near Compton Rectory, he saw down the long road a horseman cantering towards him on the wayside grass. In all his life Tristram had known only two men who sat a horse with so supreme an ease; one was his friend, the other his rival. And at that moment he could have wished it were Armand risen, from his bloody grave.

Dormer came on; drew rein and bent down. "I thought it was you," he said as they shook hands. "I guess that you left the coach at Lambourn and walked over the Downs."

"I did," answered Tristram.

"That must have been delightful," remarked the other, and Tristram, without answering, opened the Rectory gate and watched him pass in.

There was no denying that the Rector had aged during the past year, but to-night he was quite rejuvenated.

"I am really not without hopes of having Horatia home for Christmas," he announced, as they sat down to dinner. "Of course you know, Mr. Dormer, that I

lost my son-in-law last June under very tragic circumstances. He took part in the rising organised by that misguided woman the Duchesse de Berry, and was shot, poor boy, by the soldiers of the Government. A dreadful business; he died in my daughter's arms. The shock completely prostrated her, as you may imagine; she was ill for some time, then there were endless legal formalities, and it is only now that she talks of being able to come over and pay me a long visit at Christmas."

"Does she not intend to make her home in England?" asked Dormer.

"She wishes to, naturally," replied Mr. Grenville, "and by French law she can do as she likes, but whether poor Armand's relatives will bring pressure to bear to keep her in France I don't know. I try not to meet trouble half-way. At any rate she will be here for Christmas. There will be a child in the house again; Christmas seems to demand that. And to think that you have both seen my grandson since I have!"

Neither of the young men waxed communicative on the subject of the infant; Dormer, indeed, had suddenly become rather thoughtful.

"Tristram, you will have to come over here at Christmas-time," went on the Rector. "We must hang up a stocking for Maurice. They don't keep Christmas in France, I understand."

Tristram murmured something about being busy at Christmas, and that he would be taking his priest's orders just before that festival.

"Oh, I daresay you'll be able to manage it," said the Rector easily. "A few days in the country now and then would set you up, living as you do in that plague-spot. By the way, I hear you exposed yourself very unnecessarily in the cholera there—most laudable of

course, but you young men are so rash. It's just the same with this foolish and shocking idea of throwing over the supremacy of the State which you have got into your heads. Church and State, to any right-thinking mind, are as inseparable as body and soul, and it will be a black day for England if they are ever torn apart. How you, Mr. Dormer, with your ultra-Tory ancestry . . . but there, I suppose it is just because they *were* Non-jurors that the idea is not as repugnant to you as it ought to be."

"Dormer's not a Tory, Rector," remarked Tristram. "He's a Radical, like me, now."

"Oh, indeed," returned Mr. Grenville, not much perturbed. "Well, I won't upset your convictions; but, Tories or Radicals, I don't fancy you will welcome this new Parliament of ours when we get it."

"Why not, Mr. Grenville?" asked Dormer.

"Because, if ever there was a middle-class measure, it is this Reform Act! You mark my words, it will be worse, not better, for the poor man now than under the old state of things."

"I fully agree with you," observed Dormer.

"It is quite pathetic," pursued the Rector, "to see how every class thinks the Millennium is coming because of the extension of the franchise. Wages are going to rise, and the price of corn is going to fall. . . . No, what is really wanted is Poor Law reform. Am I not right, Tristram?"

Tristram wearily agreed. It seemed to him that the evening would never end. He only desired one thing, to be alone. In the study after dinner the Rector rallied him once or twice on his silence, and he was half afraid to meet Dormer's eyes, which always saw so much. Yet when at last Mr. Grenville, taking up his

own candlestick, had said paternally, " Now don't you young men stay talking here till the small hours," and himself departed to bed, Tristram sat down again by the fire, lest the abrupt exit which he longed to make should either wound his friend or give him cause for speculation. And he then embarked on such an unnecessarily detailed account of the pressing need of better drainage, not only in the parish of St. Thomas's but also in St. Clement's, in fact throughout the whole of Oxford, that his somewhat unresponsive listener came to the conclusion that he was thoroughly overdone by the cholera, and suggested of his own accord that they should go to bed.

CHAPTER III

GREAT things were vouchsafed on Saturday, the 14th of December, 1832, to Mrs. Polly White, sister and correspondent of Mrs. Martha Kemblet, for, it being the day on which she went to "do" at the Rectory, she was enabled to combine the fine drawing of a table-cloth (an art in which she was proficient) with the sight of the arrival of Miss Horatia and the Rector, the precious babe and her own sister. Mr. Grenville had gone to Dover to meet the packet, and the party was expected from Oxford, by chaise, some time in the afternoon.

The village was all agog about Horatia's return, and some spirits, lacking delicacy rather than enthusiasm, had entertained the idea of an evergreen arch across the Rectory gate, to bear the words "Welcome Home," and to be adorned with such decorations as had survived from the Coronation festivities fifteen months before. The impropriety of so receiving a newly-made widow having been pointed out, gossip had then spent itself in speculations as to how Miss 'Ratia would look, not only in her weeds, poor dear, but in the status of a French countess, or whatever she was, for it was felt that in some way she would be a different person from the Miss 'Ratia they had known. One old man, however, dratting them all, announced his unalterable intention of putting a couple of lighted candles in his window, for if his darter had taken and married a Frenchy, and had

come home again after so disastrous a step, widder or no widder, he should consider it a clear case of " This my darter wur dead, and be alive again ; and wur lost and be found." Such was indeed the general feeling in Compton Regis, where only a few impressionable damsels were found to remark that Miss 'Ratia's husband had been a proper young man, and that 'twas a gurt pity he had been killed in them foreign wars.

Mrs. White deplored all this chatter though she would fain have contributed to it. When, therefore, about four o'clock, Ellen rushed into the room where she was working to say that the chaise was turning in at the gate, she flew with the rest of the domestics to the front door. And thus, curtseying like them, she was privileged to see the black and yellow post-chaise from the *Angel* at Oxford draw up at the steps, to behold the Rector emerge and assist to alight, first a lady in the deepest mourning, a long crape veil such as Mrs. White had never seen covering her from head to foot, secondly, a foreign-looking nurse or nursemaid (disliked by Mrs. White on the spot, though bearing a priceless burden), and lastly her own dear comfortable, capable sister, not changed a bit. And she saw the Comtesse put back her long veil, and come up the steps on her father's arm, looking that sweet, but so sad ! The Rector, poor dear gentleman, seemed moved, as who wouldn't be. Miss 'Ratia, when you saw her in the light, was older, a little, and thin in the cheeks, but the weeds set off her hair and complexion beautiful. As for the lovely infant, he was asleep, and Mrs. White preferred in any case to view him when Martha could act as show-woman. And so, as the party mounted the stairs, she returned to her napery, hoping that her sister would shortly appear.

But Martha was indeed unchanged, and it was not

until things were " to her liking," the nurse properly installed, the child in bed, her mistress's trunks unpacked, and her mistress at table with his Reverence, that she permitted herself to seek out and to embrace her sister. Then, due greeting and inquiries having passed, Mrs. Kemblet, seated in a restful chair, began her desired narration.

" I wish I could have got my lamb to go to bed at once, and have her dinner there. However, she's a sight stronger than she was, and has stood the journey wonderful, considering. Rough it was, too, and the packet rolling something horrible. But here we all are safely, thanks to One Above, and the infant none the worse, though a trifle fractious, bless his heart ! "

" Ah, but what *she* must have been through, Martha ! " said Mrs. White feelingly.

This was a whip to a willing horse. " You may well say that, Polly," responded her sister. " What with being fetched like that all sudden at night, to find the poor young gentleman weltering in an agony—for he was shot something terrible, they said—and him dying in her arms (all unprepared, too, I'm afraid), and then going back to Paris with his body, and the household off their heads, and the funeral—I don't know what we should have done without the elder one, the Marquis as they call him . . . "

" Dear, dear ! " ejaculated Mrs. White, as the narrator paused for breath. " And where was the poor young man buried, then ? "

" At the grand family place where we was during the cholera time. . . . Well, to go back to the dreadful occurrence " (impossible to deny that there was relish in Mrs. Kemblet's tone over these words) " when Miss Horatia gets this letter and rushes off to this place, St.

Clair, without even telling me where she was going, we couldn't none of us do anything till the Marquis comes back next morning early. Off he goes then to St. Clair ; then he comes back and says his brother is lying dead in the big house there, having been shot in the wood by the Government soldiers, and that he is going to have him brought away, and to fetch Miss Horatia too. And, by and by, they brought him, carrying him on a bier with a flag over him, not that red, white, and blue thing they use now in France, but the old one, the white one. And they laid him in the chapel at his own place, where we was, with candles all burning ; hardly Christian in a way, not being in a coffin, but I must say he looked beautiful, and when I went in to see him, I cried like a baby ; for though I always begrudged him having Miss Horatia, and never trusted him, it did seem dreadful him being cut off like that, so young ; and I daresay he would have settled down if he had been spared."

Mrs. White wiped her sympathetic eyes, but caught at the last words. " He wasn't what you'd call a good husband to Miss Horatia then ? "

" I don't say that," returned Martha, slightly stiffening. " All them young men over there are wild," she explained, with an air of profound acquaintance with Gallic youth. " The less said about it the better, that's my motto. And really I begun to wonder if I'd not been mistook, seeing the state my poor lamb was in after he was killed. For weeks after we got back to Paris she could not sleep without I was in the little room off hers—always seeing him in her dreams she was, and calling out that he was bleeding to death, and begging him to forgive her—the Lord knows why—and imploring someone to go to him. She fainted at the funeral ; a grand funeral it was, with a Bishop to

bury him, and a sermon saying he was a martyr for the altar and the throne, whatever that meant. The old Madam nearly went out of her mind over it all, she was that fond of the Count. Then when she—the old one—was quieted down a bit nothing would serve but she must be having the child up in her nasty stuffy bedroom at all hours of the day, saying it was all that was left her, and things like that."

"But surely Miss Horatia had something to say to that?"

Martha leant forward very impressively. "You mark my words, Polly, there's going to be a tussle over that child! You and me thinks he's English, bless him, because he's Miss Horatia's, but by law he's French, and belongs over there, and you wouldn't believe the difficulty there's been about our leaving Paris. I've not been told, and it's not for me to ask, whether we're coming here on long visits, or whether my Lady will make her home here. But this I do say, they've got their eye on him, the poor innocent, and it'll be worse as he grows up."

"What a shame!" said Mrs. White indignantly. "And he no older than my Harriet's Willy!"

Mrs. Kemblet rose with majesty, and with majesty she replied, "That's as it may be, but I don't think you realise, Polly, that when the old Duke and his son dies, there'll be only one life between the Count asleep upstairs and the dukedom."

"Lor!" ejaculated Mrs. White.

And by the child upstairs there stood his grandfather and his mother, looking down at him in his rosy abandonment of slumber.

"Papa, he was very fond of him," said Horatia at last, and turning, she threw herself weeping into her father's arms.

CHAPTER IV

(I)

All through the falling of the leaves—the creeper leaves that dropped slowly, resplendent in death, from college walls, the narrow willow leaves that were whirled floating on to the streams, the leaves that made a carpet, the leaves that were like rain, the leaves that laughed as they fell, the leaves that fluttered to the ground like wounded birds—Tristram wrestled with the angel of bewilderment.

Not even Dormer could help him. He had known that from the night at the Rectory. The matter was too intimately between himself and God; he must struggle through alone. And though, when he was back in Oxford, Dormer had come and sought him out in his lodgings, in order to tell him that he thought he was overworking, and ought to spare himself a little more, Tristram merely said that he was quite well, and let him go without a sign.

He was in a mist of anguish and perplexity. If he could only see the path, he told himself, he was ready to follow it, however sharp its flints. But where lay his road? If that reawakened desire of his, hidden from his own eyes till the wind of the Downs had rent the curtain, were sin, then he would cut it from him, at whatever cost. For even then the self that prayed with such intensity for happiness was so much the captive of a surrendered will that at the last it

had struggled towards obedience with *Non voluntas mea*. . . .

But how could his desire be sin? He was not a Roman Catholic priest; he was a member of a body where marriage was almost expected. Even if, at his ordination, his intention had been plain to himself, he had taken no formal vow of celibacy. Newman, in spite of his ascetic views, thought that vows were foolish, and showed a lack of trust in Providence. Moreover, might not Horatia's sudden liberation be a sign that she was meant for him after all? And how could she hinder him in his work?—she would be a help to any man. He thought of what she might be as a companion, as an inspiration. And he wanted her for herself; he wanted the warm and ordered joys of home. Was that wrong? How could such desires be wrong, when God Himself had implanted them? Had not Jeremy Taylor called marriage "the nursery of heaven?"

But he knew now that this very exaltation of marriage by the Christian Church was only the other side of her exaltation of virginity. This lost truth, the heart of early asceticism—positive offence though it was even to persons who prided themselves on taking literally every other Gospel precept—he had learnt unwillingly enough. He too had found it a hard saying, but like his friends at Oriel, having once admitted it, he could not conveniently forget it. And though these men, because of their intense belief in the Divine plan for every individual life, would never presume to demand from him that he should not marry, yet, with their severe ideals, they would certainly expect that he should not go back on a line once chosen. And he had chosen; no use to deny that. He knew, if no other human being

knew, how deeply he was committed to the idea of the life without ties. It was impossible for him to blink the fact that, had Horatia not become free, he would have gone on in the direction in which his mind was set. This present hesitation meant, then, that when, in his heart, he had made a dedication of his life to God, it was only because the one woman he wanted had been taken from him—an offering, as he had always felt, but little worth, though the best that he could bring. But now, now that the offering was to cost him more dear, he was desirous of taking it back again. And he reflected how such conduct would appear in worldly matters. It did not seem to him that its transference to another plane of values would render it any the more creditable.

Yes, said another voice, but you cannot set your relations with the Almighty on a sort of business footing. Do you imagine that the Architect of the Universe keeps a strict ledger account with the dust he has called into being, that he does not know the weak and childish heart of it, and accept its poor offerings, not like a merchant, but like a king ?

To and fro went the warring armies in his soul, while his body carried him about his business among the poor of St. Thomas's. But all the time the tide of combat was setting in one direction, and at last he knew it.

There was a certain old woman in one of the courts to whom he used to read every day. Though dirty and illiterate she was methodical and self-willed, and, oblivious of the lessons of the day, selected what book of the Bible she pleased to be read straight through to her. In this way, after a course of Deuteronomy, she had pitched upon St. Mark.

" You was reading yesterday, Sir, how we should cut off our 'ands and feet and cast them into 'ell fire," she

observed one morning as Tristram sat down in her little room. " It seems a 'ard thing to be told to do, don't it ? "

Scarcely encouraged by this result of his ministrations, Tristram promptly turned to the end of the ninth chapter and re-read the passage, trying to explain as simply as possible its meaning. But the attitude of the old dame was that of one taking her stand on the rock of the Word—" the Good Book says so, and it don't become us to say otherwise "—and after a while, seeing that his exegesis was making no impression, he desisted, and went on to the tenth chapter. He was reading it, truth to tell, without attending much to the words, his mind occupied half unconsciously with the eternal conflict, when he found that he was in the midst of the story of the young ruler, and that his lips were repeating the familiar words, " One thing thou lackest . . . sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

All the rest of the day the story kept running in his head. He could not quite think why, except that it was one of those scenes in the Gospel, dealing with an individual, which had always interested him. With his mother's charity he had often hoped that the young ruler came back after all. He remembered once having a talk with Dormer, who said that there was some sort of tradition that he returned, but that he, Dormer, thought there was very little ground for such a hope. On the same occasion he had enunciated a theory which Tristram had thought rather austere—that certain people, often good people, who had kept the commandments from their youth up, could only be saved at all by enduring hardness. Such people were constantly asked to make decisions involving sacrifice,

and whereas others seemed able to compass the heavenly ascent by a tolerably easy road, they, if they were to reach the same summit, must climb by a very different path.

And somehow Tristram began to apply these conditions to himself. He had kept the commandments, he had great possessions—friends, enough to live upon, perhaps the possession that he had coveted all these years. What if he were in the position of the young ruler, although he had already begun to obey the command. He had thought that God was perhaps calling him to the single life because he could serve the poor better in that state. He had found how happy he could be at St. Thomas's, and experience had convinced him that for such work a man must be single. It was not just the fact of marrying Horatia. He would have responsibilities which would clash with what he hoped to do. He could not take her to live in the midst of dirt and poverty to risk her health, and the health of their children. If he married her he would be turning his back on his work. According to Dormer's theory he might be turning his back on Christ.

And so, in no romantic surroundings but among the trying adornments of his little room in Hollybush Row —the waxen bouquets springing from woolwork mats and shrined under domes of glass, the very bad engraving of the entry of the Allies into Paris, the lustre jugs, the framed announcement of the Oxford coaches and the wall-paper that oppressed the very soul—he fought his way through to the conclusion that Horatia was not for him now any more than she had been two years ago. He must take the harder path, he must go on as he had begun.

The stuffed parrot in the centre of his mantelpiece,

at which, unknowing, he had been staring fixedly for the last hour, regarded him with a cynical and leering eye. "*So this is religion!*" it seemed to say. "*And this is a man!*"

Tristram, though appreciating the taunt, got up and put the critic outside the door.

(2)

Three weeks later, at two o'clock in the afternoon of Christmas Eve, he was stepping into the post-chaise which was to take him out to Compton Regis to see Horatia for the first time since her return. He had been ordained priest only yesterday. The Rector had been in the Cathedral, and Tristram, touched by his presence, had accepted his urgent invitation to come over to Compton on the morrow, Christmas Eve though it was. For this summons he had, indeed, been preparing himself, since whatever course he should afterwards decide upon, he must at least go out and see Horatia once.

Yesterday afternoon, amid the frightful Christmas bustle outside the *Mitre*, in the clamour of departing coaches laden with geese and turkeys, he had said farewell to Dormer, who had stayed thus late in Oxford for his sake, and was posting to Whitchurch, where he would catch the London and Exeter mail in the morning. Even so his expectant nephews and nieces at Colyton would all be in bed long before he reached his brother's house on Christmas Eve. Tristram had deprecated this sacrifice, but Dormer had insisted on staying to see him ordained.

Down past the front of Christ Church went the chaise, over the river, and towards the hill—ways so familiar. But the self that travelled them to-day was different.

The tortures of indecision were over. Yesterday had put the seal on his dedication. Wonderfully, unbelievably, the choice had been offered to him after all—the reality of sacrifice, not mere acquiescence in past suffering, and because his attitude was no more that of a loveless obedience, he almost longed to feel the pain which he knew was before him. And, even if there was combat to come, he would know now on which side he fought, he would not go away sorrowful.

The drawing-room at Compton Rectory was not empty, as he had at first thought, for in a chair before the fire, with her back to him, was seated Horatia herself. On a fold of her black dress lay some immature woolly object which he could not identify, and in the crook of her right arm rested a little motionless head clothed, none too thickly, with curling rings of bronze-gold hair.

Tristram stopped in his advance. And at that she lifted her head and spoke.

"Tristram! Is that you already? He is asleep. Come round here, if you will." He came to her other side, and his lips met the wedding ring on the hand which she tendered to him, smiling.

"Dear Tristram!" she said, in the same soft tones of welcome, looking up at him. "How kind of you to come! Will you get yourself a chair?"

He obeyed, still rather speechless, and when he had sat down she asked him if he had ridden or driven, whether the Rector knew that he was there, all in a quiet and unembarrassed manner. Then she suddenly bent her head and said, "Maurice, it is time that you woke up and spoke to this gentleman."

Long lashes as black as night lay on the cheeks of

Maurice-Victor-Stanislas de la Roche-Guyon, and one hand grasped firmly a string of jet beads hanging from his mother's neck. His slumber was profound and determined. Tristram gazed at him, his mind in something of a whirl.

"He got tired, playing with his lamb," vouchsafed Horatia, and as she looked down at the sleeping child a most divine little smile came over her face.

The revelation of that look, and the presence of her son somehow almost deprived Tristram of the power to ask her the thousand questions about herself that were on his lips. He got out a few, in a lowered tone, and then, with little warning but a sudden drowsy stretching, Maurice awoke, and out of Armand's eyes, but bluer and more innocent, looked up straight at the visitor.

The effect was disconcerting to both. Tristram disguised his feelings, but the younger person, giving way to whatever emotion he may have felt, silently buried his head in his mother's arm.

Horatia smiled that new smile of hers, and put a kiss on the curls.

"I was so sorry that I could not come to your ordination yesterday, Tristram," she was beginning. "Papa would not let me take the long drive, but I wished very much to come . . ."

But just then the Rector entered, and the talk became general, even, on Horatia's side, rather disjointed, for the Comte de la Roche-Guyon, demanding to be put down, crawled meanwhile with an extraordinary rapidity about the floor, addressing in obscure terms every object that he encountered on his route, footstools, hearthrug, even the flora of the carpet. Finally he embraced with fervour one of Tristram's legs, and Tristram, after a

moment or two, stooped and lifted him on to his knee. After all, he might as well accustom himself to children, though he would rather have gone to school with the child of someone else. Maurice smiled.

"Up!" he observed pertinently, and kicked out his feet with happy vigour, somewhat endangering his balance.

"He doesn't often take to people like that!" observed his mother and grandfather simultaneously, and with the usual amount of truth . . .

It was over. And as the post-chaise jolted him back in the darkness to Oxford, Tristram's whole heart was so swamped with the thought of Horatia, what she must have gone through, how miraculously she had changed, that there was little room for the contemplation of himself. She had now what she wanted; he was sure of it; she held it in her arms. The great surprise of it, after Paris, only made him the more convinced. God had given her compensation for what she had suffered. Yet the more he thought, with all a man's touch of sentiment, about the little group in the firelight, the more that it seemed to him wonderful, beautiful, and, for Horatia, consummatory, the more did he realise the cost of selling that great possession which he might have had. Just as he had stood and looked on at mother and child this evening, so must he always stand now and look on—no more—at the sanctities of home.

And he had a sudden vision, too, of Dormer, surrounded to-morrow in church by the fair heads of his brother's many children, kneeling in the midst of a bevy who were none of his. He had once told Tristram of the whispered communications that were wont to be made

to him in service-time, of the happy terror in the eyes that would follow the small pointing finger up " Little Choke-a-bone Alley " to the tomb of the girl of royal lineage choked, hundreds of years ago, "by a fish-bone, Uncle Charles!"—to the effigy which had thrilled him himself as a boy. . . . There are veils which the hand of a close friend is the last to touch, and whether Dormer had ever suffered as he had suffered, or whether the vision which he had always followed shone with a light so effulgent that no other joys had radiance, Tristram could never pity him. But, remembering his long patience and hope, he desired suddenly to give him a Christmas gift, and though the letter could not reach him on the feast itself, and though it cost him something to do it, he sat down, when he got back, and told him what he had kept from him yesterday, that he had indeed, at last, sold whatsoever he had.

And, when he offered the Eucharist for the first time on Christmas morning, he made his own oblation, mingled of pain and joy.

CHAPTER V

(1)

THE Rector had just closed the door of his study on the retreating form of Mary Straker, a blushing village damsel who had come to impart to him the news of approaching matrimony. Mr. Grenville had a peculiar interest in the announcement, for some three years previously he had intervened to shield her inamorato from the consequences of a poaching adventure, and had emigrated him up to Yorkshire as a groom. The grateful swain had now written to his betrothed to inform her that he had saved enough money to marry upon, and that he intended to return this spring for the ceremony, and would Mary please tell his Reverence so, and he hoped, with his best respects, as his Reverence would say the words over them come Easter.

Mr. Grenville was pleased, and went smiling to the window. Drumming on the pane a moment, he looked out at the young green of March, and hoped Tom Hollings and little Polly would be happy. In his parish the Rector was something of a matchmaker. He had an obscure conviction that one had only to put two people together and they would hit it off somehow ; in fact he had always taken a rosy view of marriage—until the marriage of his own daughter. He thought of that now, and, suddenly sighing, came away from the window.

He was really worried about Horatia, in spite of the fact that she looked distinctly better since her return

three months ago. But she seemed sometimes as if she would never recover from her sadness. She had lost her habit of teasing him ; she was, for her, rather too sweetly reasonable. And yet he could not help her. Poor darling ! he could not bear to think that she knew so much of evil, and had grown so much older in such a short time. In some ways the thing that he most resented in the whole unhappy affair was the smirching of her innocence. While he was in Paris he had been really shocked at the Duchesse's broad views when, with her accustomed frankness, she had laid before him the reason for his grandson's premature arrival, emphasising the fact that she was annoyed not with Armand's conduct in itself, but with his carelessness. And though he was half unwilling to listen to Martha, there were things which she insisted on telling him, prefacing them with "And I think you ought to know, Sir."

But because Armand was dead he thought of him now as "that poor young man," and, to his mind, his tragic removal somehow whitewashed his conduct and made it "better not to think of it." At the same time he did not fail, in his inmost heart, to feel that removal a direct work of Providence, and was deeply ashamed of this feeling, especially when he considered Maurice's fatherless condition. Often, indeed, watching him with his mother, was Mr. Grenville struck with the pathos of the situation. He loved to see them together, especially when Horatia did not know that he was looking at them; she seemed to him so beautifully maternal, and he could hardly believe that there had been a time when she did not care for the child.

Mr. Grenville began to pace up and down, his hands behind his back, and not for the first time did he wonder

whether the comfort which he was powerless to give Horatia might not, after all, come from another quarter. He had, for his part, a distinct objection to second marriages, and had acted on it in his own case, but he would be easier to Horatia than he had been to himself. Horatia was still so young, the fatherless Maurice so tiny, her married life—her unhappy married life—had been so short . . . eighteen months! Then the presence of Tristram, still unmarried and, as far as he knew, unchanged in his feelings towards Horatia, seemed to him almost providential. Tristram Hungerford indeed was steadfastness incarnate; he could not conceive of his changing. But, of course, he did not know what Tristram thought of second marriages. In any case, however, his present attitude was very proper, not intruding upon Horatia's grief. Besides, he was probably waiting till he had a living. Yet, second marriges . . .

Mr. Grenville stopped in his promenade, and with a look on his face as of one about to drink medicine, took down Jeremy Taylor from a shelf and turned over the pages till he came to that divine's remarks on the widowed state. Tightening his lips, he shut up the book after a moment with something like a bang, and replaced it. Yes, second marriages . . . But, after all, he was going on rather fast.

(2)

When the Rector returned, late that afternoon, from visiting his parishioners, he was rather surprised to find Horatia sitting on a stool in front of his study fire, which had only just been lit. As soon as he had sat down beside her she put her head on his knee, and said, with the directness of a child :

" Papa, dear, I want to talk to you. I am so unhappy! I must talk to someone."

The Rector put his hand on her hair, half alarmed, half pleased that she had come to him. "What is it, my love?" he said tenderly. " Only this morning I was thinking of you and wishing I could comfort you."

" O Papa, I can't say it to you. I am so wicked!" And she began to cry.

"My dearest child," said the Rector, astonished, "what do you mean? How can you have been wicked? Come, then, tell me all about it. There is nothing you cannot say to me. I can understand how you loved him in spite—in spite of many things."

" But that is just it," answered Horatia, sobbing. " I did not really love him." Then she went on in an outburst, " You think now that I'm grieving for him because I loved him. It isn't true. I'm grieving just because I didn't love him. I want to say to people, Don't be sorry for me, don't look at my black dress! I am a wicked woman, I did not love my husband. I did not even do my duty."

Mr. Grenville put an arm round his daughter's shoulders and bent over her. " My child, you mustn't talk like this. We know that poor Armand was not all that he might have been to you, and I daresay I know more than you think. You married him for better or for worse, and in some ways . . . for although he is dead we must face facts . . . I have little doubt it was for worse. It was a shock to your innocence to find out much that you ought never to have known. I ought to have warned you more, to have told you more. My darling child, your old father has been greatly to blame. If only your dear mother had been alive!"

" Papa, you did warn me," she said, drying her eyes.

" I was very wilful ; I thought I knew best. But it seemed then as if Armand came and opened a new world to me, and I thought it was love . . . but it could not have been . . . and then I began to hear things . . . and before Maurice was born . . ."

" I know, my dear," said the Rector, smoothing her hair.

" And Maurice, the darling, I was so wicked I would not look at him . . . and as for Armand, I believe I almost hated him . . . and I told him he was dead to me . . . and now he is dead really . . . and how can I say I loved him ! "

The Rector reflected a little before replying.

" I would not think too much, Horatia, of whether you loved him or did not love him. I understand that you are trying to be honest with yourself, but now you have told me do not fret about that part of it. You made mistakes, and it is all very sad, but try to remember that we are in the hands of a merciful Creator. 'He knoweth whereof we are made; He remembereth that we are but dust.' "

" If only I could be like you, Papa, and could have your trust ! It frightens me to think about him."

" Tell me, my dear."

" O, he did not want to die. He was so young, and he loved life. He said one thing that I shall never forget : ' If they tell you that I was resigned, do not believe them.' "

" Poor boy, poor boy ! " murmured the Rector huskily.

" And the way he died was so dreadful ! I had never seen anyone die before, and I did not know how awful it could be. O, I have been so frightened ! " said Horatia, now almost incoherent. " I see him always

with the blood spreading through the linen, and I hear him always calling in that terrible voice, 'Laurence, Laurence! . . .'"

"Ah!" said the Rector, compressing his lips. He made an effort to control himself. "Don't go on, Horatia; don't distress youself! I know all about it. We must try not to judge the dead—and may God have mercy on us all!"

There was a pause, during which Mr. Grenville blew his nose violently.

"Dear, dear," he resumed at length, "you ought never to have suffered this—and to think of your being alone at such a time! I have been much to blame, much to blame! . . . There, there, my child, you will stay with me, now, and you are young, and in time you will forget——"

"Never, never!" exclaimed Horatia, raising her head.

"No; well, perhaps, I should not say that, but the old know that we must forget even if we do not want to, and as I said, you are young, and there is Maurice. He can help you more than anyone else.—You will stay with me, Horatia?"

She flung her arms tightly round his neck. "Oh, yes, Papa, if you will keep me. Two or three months every year I must go back to France, but for the rest there is no reason why I should not stay with you if you will have me." She sat still for a moment, leaning against her father's knee, and when she was a little calmer, went on, "You remember that I wrote and told you about the will, that Armand wished Maurice to go to an English school. He was very fond of him, Papa."

"Yes, my dear."

A pause.

"The more I think of it, Horatia," began Mr. Grenville solemnly, "the more I believe that you ought to find your comfort in this provision of your husband's will. It seems to me to prove that, far from doubting your affection, he felt that he owed something to you, and that this was the way he tried to make up to you. Poor young man, there was much good in him! Try to think of this, my love, and say your prayers and do your duty—and now, dear me, it is nearly dinner-time!"

CHAPTER VI

(1)

"WANT!" observed the Comte de la Roche-Guyon, stretching out a fat hand from his wheeled bassinette towards the huge red poppy nodding in the flower-bed beside him. "Want, want, want!" he repeated beating with the same member upon the satin coverlet.

Grimes the gardener, clipping the hedge near by, looked round. "And so you shall, my pretty!" quoth he. Turning, he broke off the object of Maurice's desires, and presented it to him, and Maurice, after tearing off the flaming petals, inserted the fascinating remainder into his mouth.

He had not time, however, to try his newest teeth upon the green dainty before it was torn from him and flung whirling into the bed as Martha—who had but left her charge for a moment—emptied the vials of her wrath upon the luckless donor. "And you a married man not to know better than that! You might have poisoned the precious child under his mother's very eyes! Come away, my beautiful . . . now don't cry after the nasty thing!"

As the hand of indignation wheeled Maurice away from the vicinity of the unworthy Grimes it removed him also out of Horatia's field of vision, where she sat under the acacia tree on the lawn, a book on her lap and a workbasket by her side. Horatia flew something of her old colour in her cheeks. Her father, after her outburst in the spring, had told her to say her

prayers and to do her duty. To do her duty, or what she knew that her father would conceive to be her duty, was easy—anything was easy that served to take her mind off herself. She did all she could for Maurice, and was unaware that Martha generally did it all over again. She paid visits and went to local shows, proceedings that before her marriage had been very distasteful to her. The Rector thought her so brave, and wonderfully softened, for now she seemed to suffer fools gladly. She did, for any company was better than her own.

But to say her prayers was a different matter, for though she repeated a form of words she could not pray, and she hated being in church, for there her mind invariably became clear, and all that she had shut away in a box marked "Paris" would emerge, and be, not a dream of the past, but a present reality. At any moment this box was not over-securely fastened. Inside were remorse and hatred. Every letter from France shook the lid—though such letters were not very frequent—one or two melancholy epistles from the Duc, a few kind notes from Emmanuel, some, not so benevolent, from the Dowager, and one malicious communication from the Marquise de Beaulieu, informing her that Madame de Vigerie had not been seen in society this year, and that every one was wondering why. . . . How she hated the Vicomtesse! It was she who had cast the first poisoned fruit into their Eden, it was she who had deceived her with a show of friendship, she who had caused her to condemn Armand innocent, she who had lured him on —lured him on to his death. Merely to think of her was to revive, in its fadeless colours, that picture or dream of him, lying dead in her arms. . . .

Better than saying her prayers or doing her duty were Tristram's visits.

She did not take them as a matter of course, but looked forward to them almost eagerly, comparing them with the many times he had come in old days. She was changed, she knew, but so was he. The fact of his becoming a clergyman might have been expected to make him more sedate, but it had had the opposite effect. At times he was quite lighthearted and full of hope, and seemed to find no little enjoyment in the prospect of a fight to come. The hope and the joy of battle were for the Church, for the Church was in danger, and yet Horatia no longer wanted to laugh at him or to tease him. He would tell her that he and his friends at Oriel were conspirators, and that one day the conspiracy would break out, that Oxford was going to lead another hope, and not a forlorn one. In July he had said that they only waited for Newman to come back from Italy, that Froude was full of fire, and that if Keble could only be got to move he would be more potent than anyone.

Horatia had watched eagerly to see what the Reformed Parliament would do, and, when the bill for the suppression of the Irish bishoprics was introduced, she was pleasurably thrilled at the thought then presented to her that perhaps an era of persecution had really begun. She was full of elation when Mr. Keble preached his stirring Assize sermon in July and of regret that she herself had not heard it. In August she felt the futility of the meeting at Hadleigh, and she was as convinced as Tristram could have wished that no great movement was ever successfully conducted by an association; she was sure that it must be the work of individuals. And now she was waiting for

the appearance of the first-fruits of that idea—the projected series of Tracts.

It was like an exciting game, for Horatia's interest was, after all, purely intellectual. And her instinct told her that even if Mr. Froude could speak jestingly of a conspiracy, and the friends could use, out of reverence for holy things, a "little language" which to the outsider appeared merely flippant, there was within them a spirit which made her shrink. She knew that they had a profound belief in Providence, that they believed they had a work to do, and were but tools for its execution. This alone was a disturbing thought. And she perceived in them a moral force, a severity and a relentlessness which she had never met before. If, as people said, they wished to copy the Roman Catholics, she was at a loss to know where in that body, as she knew it, they had found their exemplar, for not even in Monsignor de la Roche-Guyon, reputed and sincerely believed by her to be a saint, had she seen any trace of this spirit. But it was to be found, no doubt, in the religious orders. It also occurred to Horatia that this reformation of the Church for which Tristram's friends were so eager would mean a change in the lives of the clergy. It would mean the disappearance of the hunting parson, of the prosperous rector of the "three-bottle school," even, she supposed, of the fashionable Evangelical preacher. But it might mean, too, a change in the people who were taught by the clergy. . . . She much preferred not to hear about this sort of thing from Tristram, and yet he was so eager, when once set on to talk, that she often started him for the mere pleasure of watching him. She could laugh at its absurdity, yet she felt a lurking sympathy with Lord Melbourne's plaint, that things

were coming to a pretty pass if religion was to invade the affairs of daily life, for thought hovering round this connection was apt to become personal in its application, and that which served generally as a diversion would end by making her conscience still more uneasy.

Tristram might come any day now in his round of distributing these new Tracts. As Maurice was wheeled away Horatia took up the August number of the "British Magazine" on her knee to look at the "Lyra Apostolica" for that month, which she had not yet read. It would be interesting to see whether she could guess the authorship of each of these unsigned poems, and to tell Tristram her surmise. She suspected Mr. Newman, who edited them, of writing most of them himself.

There were only three "Lyra" last month, she found, and they all referred in some way or other to "the Golden Keys." The first, short and somewhat cryptic, was called "The Three Absolutions."

What were the three absolutions? Two she knew of; a little note said that the third was to be found in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick. She must look it up one day. . . . Then, suddenly remembering that there was an old Prayer Book somewhere in her workbasket, she stopped and found it, and, turning up the place, suffered considerable amazement. . . .

She looked again at the poem—

"Full of the past, all shuddering thought,
Man waits his hour with upward eye—
The Golden Keys in love are brought
That he may hold by them and die."

In her own Church then she could have Absolution

if she were dying. She felt that when she came to die she would like to have it, and remembered that there had been a time when she had thought that, if she were to go on living, she must have it, a time when she had not excused herself, but when, in the first weeks of horror and misery, she had taken all the blame, had been too much overwhelmed with self-accusation and remorse even to taste perfectly her hatred of Madame de Vigerie.

And with the thought the gates opened, and the whole tide of memory burst upon her, full-waved, bearing her out of the safe and quiet English garden to a little church in Paris, holding a warm incense-burdened air, and flooded with a soft dusk in which the winking light before the altar seemed doubly alive and significant, and the irregular concourse of candles by the statue of the Madonna burnt with a speaking radiance. And she was kneeling in a rush-bottomed kneeling-chair, weighed down by her deep mourning, unable to pray, her mind a maze of inarticulate pain, not knowing how or why she had strayed into this place, except that it was peaceful. A few persons scattered about among the disordered chairs got up one by one, moved away, and after a while knelt down again, and there was a murmur of voices. In a moment or two Horatia realised that they were making their confessions, an idea which had once been full of a fascinated horror Now it suddenly seemed reasonable. That woman, for instance, a widow like herself, coming back from the confessional to her place, what had she been saying, what had she been told to do, what was she feeling like now? Supposing it had been she herself . . . for no one could say hard enough things to her, nor could any penance equal the anguish that it would be to put

her self-accusation into words, and to acknowledge her wrongdoing. Yet anguish she would have welcomed. Had she been of the faith of these people she could have comfort too. . . . But that was impossible.

And there came for the hundredth time the vision of Armand going in bitterness and agony down the slope to death, with the ironic little smile on his wryed mouth, the livid circles round the eyes which once had held for her all the light in the world. For she knew now—and the knowledge was only an added pang—that the reawakened feeling of that terrible night was only a transient emotion. She buried her face in her hands, and the heartrending pity of it surged over her, the horror and the tragedy of death, of his death, young and reluctant. Kneeling there, her face hidden, every voice of her soul went out suddenly to plead for him, though she knew not what to plead. . . "O God, it was my doing! The blame was not his, not his, O God. . . . He was kind to me, always. Have mercy, have mercy. . . ."

So, after many days, had she prayed—but not for herself.

Horatia came back as one wakens from a painful dream, and, as sometimes in such an awakening, there were tears on her cheeks. She sprang up wildly from her chair. No, it was past, and here was reality, and comfort, and things of the safe, ordinary life—the sound of the gardener's shears, the smell of cut box, a horse trotting along the road, someone opening a window in an upper storey, the voice of Dash in the kitchen garden yelping after a bird. She drew a long breath, and put out a hand to touch something

palpable and present, the rough trunk of the acacia-tree.

"Please, ma'am, Reverend 'Ungerford," said the voice of Ellen behind her.

"Ask him to come out here," said Horatia. Going back to her chair she passed her handkerchief quickly over her eyes, and snatched a small garment and needle and thread from her basket.

And Tristram, looking unusually elated, almost boyish, and also rather hot, approached her over the grass pulling something from a wallet.

"I'm too dusty to come near you," he said, coming nevertheless. "This is the sixth parsonage I've descended on this afternoon. I think I may say without vanity that 'the dun deer's hide on fleeter foot was never tied'—except that the foot in question belongs to a livery stable." He almost threw into her lap a small bundle of pamphlets, and crossed the lawn to get another chair.

Horatia looked at his back with a curious expression, but when he turned her gaze was on the uppermost Tract.

"*Fellow-Labourers*," began the first of its four small pages, "*I am but one of yourselves—a Presbyter. . . .*"

"Newman's," said Tristram, sitting down beside her. "We're going to make a row in the world at last!"

(2)

For the next six weeks or so, while various persons, clerical and lay, of the same opinions as Tristram Hungerford were riding about the country to the same end, or packing up for distribution large parcels of

the new *Tracts for the Times by Residents in Oxford*, while the clergy thus bombarded were recovering from the shock of being told by "A Presbyter" of their apostolical descent, while Hurrell Froude, ordered to Barbados in the vain pursuit of health, was showing, as usual, his daring spirit by urging Newman to break an impossible alliance with the conservative High Church—while all these portents were taking place Horatia de la Roche-Guyon was paying a number of visits. Though sorry to leave the neighbourhood of Oxford just as the fiery cross was going round, she did not altogether regret the change of scene, for she was beginning to wonder whither these pleasant conversations with Tristram were leading, and she thought that absence might enable her to gain a clearer view of the situation.

By the end of October she found herself staying with her friend Emilia Strangways (whom once she had declared she would not go to see again for seven years) at the house in Devonshire to which her husband had succeeded on the death of an uncle. Only one more visit remained, a short sojourn with the Puseys at Oxford on her way home. Maurice, who had accompanied her on her first visits nearer Compton, had not been brought so far, but, with or without her son, Horatia was now able to bear an honoured part in the continual and detailed conversations on the uprearing of children (Emilia being by now the parent of a boy and girl) and threw herself with zest into discussions on the dangers of teething and the proper thickness of infantile winter clothing, feeling sure, with something of her old insight, that Mrs. Strangways commented to her husband upon "the improvement in dear Horatia." On the wheels of these domestic conferences the visit

passed away, uneventful until its last day, when Henry Strangways descended to breakfast with a set face, and a saucer upon which reposed a minute fleck of something flabby and green.

"In my shaving water, Emilia," he said in a tense voice. "I have questioned the servants most closely. They are positive that it did not occur in the kitchen. So that means it has all begun again!"

Emilia rose with concern from behind the coffee cups, while Horatia lightly asked the nature of the intruder.

"I think," replied her host very seriously, bringing round the saucer for her inspection, "that it is cabbage. At least I fear that it is cabbage. Having in the first place been cooked, and having also been a long time in the water, it is not readily distinguishable. Whatever it is fever will probably come of it. And the Mother Superior promised me most solemnly that it should not happen again."

Horatia lifted puzzled eyes from the sodden speck.

"The nuns up at the Manor, dear," explained Emilia. "Our water comes through the Manor grounds, and they will throw things from the kitchen into it. Henry has written twice; at last he went himself and had an interview with the Mother Superior. Since then it has been better."

"I think I shall see the Lord Lieutenant about it," said Mr. Strangways. "That I and my family should succumb to fever because these misguided women—foreigners, too, most of them—have been brought up without the most elementary notions of sanitation is preposterous. The whole thing is preposterous, that they should be established in this country at all,

polluting at once our water supply and the faith of the villagers!"

"But you will write again, Henry, will you not?" urged his wife. "Or perhaps you would go again and see the Mother?"

"No, I shall not consent to another interview of that kind," returned Mr. Strangways. "I shall now put the matter in the hands of the proper authorities. *Mother*, indeed! But I shall certainly write as well, and at once. I think I shall enclose this . . . this vegetable matter. Would it not be rather to the point, Emilia, if I sent up the saucer with my compliments, and nothing else?"

Horatia burst out laughing, and then perceived that she had done the wrong thing. Her host did not mean to be funny; he never did. Finally it was settled that he should write a letter of protestation, and that, instead of its being sent by a menial hand, Emilia and her guest should walk up with it.

"I thought you might like to see the outside of the Manor," said Mrs. Strangways, as they started out over the fallen leaves. "You see, it once belonged to Henry's uncle, and he most unfortunately sold it, at the time of the French Revolution, to these nuns. As Henry says, he ought not to have been allowed to do it. The grounds are rather fine, much better than ours, and I don't know what they can want with them, for they never go out, and it is really very terrible to feel that they are throwing all sorts of refuse into the water, and might any day poison the children."

"But the convents I have seen in France were so very clean," objected Horatia. "And these are French nuns, you say? Why do they not go back?"

"I don't know," replied her informant. "I suppose

they find themselves better off here. Besides, it may not be clean inside; nobody knows, for no one is allowed further than the parlour. I daresay awful things go on, for they are said to be a very severe order. I have heard that they sleep on plank beds, and hardly ever speak, and live on bread and water. . . ."

"And cabbage!"

"Yes, I suppose so. Anyhow it is a fact that no meat ever goes in there. And they do nothing but pray—I mean, they don't embroider, or make lace, or anything useful, but just pray all day long. But Henry says it isn't tedious to them because, of course, after a few months of it, they go out of their minds."

"What do they pray for?" asked Horatia.

A shade of enjoyable horror appeared on the fair face under the beaver bonnet. "They call it Perpetual Intercession. That means praying for wicked people. I know they pray for the dead too—think of that, Horatia! Henry says it's worse than idolatry."

And on this theological dictum of Mr. Strangways they turned through a wide gateway and saw before them, through a fading glory of beech-trees, a large Elizabethan house of mellowed brick. To its left stood the chapel, an incongruous late Georgian building, and up to the main entrance led an ugly covered way of still more modern construction, topped by a statue of the Virgin and Child. Along this way Emilia preceded her guest, for it was barred only by a low oaken gate, which at the moment stood open, perhaps because a novice was scrubbing the stone floor within. Horatia glanced curiously as she passed at the grey-clad figure on its hands and knees, noticing that the hands in question were very small and white, and seemed to

have had no past connection with bristles or soapsuds. She would rather have liked to see what sort of a face went with those hands.

The aged portress who took the note from Emilia revealed, as she opened the door, a glimpse of the square Tudor hall that had once known song and carousing but was now lamentably bare and empty. Facing all who entered, and stretching up from the floor against the whitewashed panelling, was a gigantic crucifix in relief, rather more than life-size, of the most startling realism, a realism that had gone so far as to suggest that the base of the cross was sunk in the floor of the hall, for it appeared to be fixed there with large wedges. A skull lay at its foot.

"Is it not horrible?" whispered Emilia as the door shut once more. "The first time I saw it I had nightmare. . . . I think it is so *wrong* to remind oneself like that . . . Oh, merci, ma sœur!"

For the novice, who had now reached the middle of the passage had risen from her knees, and, removing her bucket out of their way, stood aside with downcast eyes for them to pass. And so Horatia's idle wish was gratified, and she saw her face—the face of Laurence de Vigerie.

CHAPTER VII

"MORE particularly am I bound to pray for the good estate of Oriel College, and herein for the Reverend the Provost, Fellows, Clerks, and all other members of that society. . . ."

It was not the first time that Horatia had listened to the bidding prayer which prefaces a sermon before the University of Oxford, nor even the first time that she had heard mentioned therein "the munificence of founders and benefactors, such as were King Edward the Second, the Founder of Oriel College, Adam de Brome, his almoner, and other benefactors of the same." But it was the first occasion on which she had heard the prayer from the lips of the preacher who, two mornings afterwards, occupied the pulpit of St. Mary-the-Virgin. And as she sat down by Mrs. Pusey's side, behind the Heads and Doctors in their scarlet and crimson, and looked up at Charles Dormer, she felt a curious accession of interest, as though she had never seen him before. In the black gown and bands he seemed, she thought, absurdly young to be addressing that august assembly. Then she remembered that, being just Tristram's age, he must be a year older than the Vicar of St. Mary's, who so often addressed them. But he did not look it.

The congregation settled down in the peculiarly arranged nave, and in rather a low voice Dormer gave out his text, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

And Horatia's momentarily excited interest sank again. She felt that she knew the kind of sermon which would be preached on that text, and she did not want to hear it. She wished with all her heart that she were not in church at all. She had not wanted to come to hear Mr. Dormer; she had only done so to fulfil a promise made to Tristram. If it had been Mr. Newman now—or Mr. Keble preaching his Assize sermon—she would have listened. . . . Laurence de Vigerie scrubbing a stone floor. . . . In the coach, at the Puseys at Christ Church, here now in St. Mary's—Laurence, the shapeless figure, the veil, the rough dress. . . .

A miracle had happened to Horatia, and she hardly knew it for a miracle. What religion and conscience could not bring about, human feeling and Protestant indignation had accomplished. That one moment's contact with a—to her—shocking reality had swept away, on a flood of horrified pity, not only her hatred but even the thought of forgiveness as a duty. She knew nothing of either now, only that her heart (preparing as it was to welcome a happiness of its own) was aching with compassion. Why was Laurence doing this awful thing? It was not right to punish herself like that. why had she not spoken to her! *"Laurence, I am so sorry. It was more his fault than yours; I know it. Don't, don't make yourself so unhappy. It is all wrong . . . all a mistake. . . ."*

Her brain worked on, and the tears came hot into her eyes. She must concentrate her mind on something else, or she would really cry. Definite words in a clear voice came to her, and she remembered that she was supposed to be listening to Mr. Dormer, and that he must be three parts through by now. She looked up at

him again, over the distinguished heads in front of her, this man not so very much older than herself, who was Tristram's greatest friend, and whom she had never liked, as he stood, using no gestures, in the new wooden pulpit that reared itself up against a slender column of nave, the rows of Masters of Arts below. A pillar in front of her, somewhat to her left, and the edge of the north gallery for undergraduates, beneath which she sat, made two sides of a square to frame him, as if for herself alone. She listened.

"What is a pure heart? A German mystic has said that it is a heart which finds its whole and only satisfaction in God, whose thoughts and intents are ever occupied with God, which makes all joys and griefs, all outward cares and anxieties work together for the glory of God.

"How far does such a temper of mind seem to be from all of us who call ourselves Christians! and yet our Lord has definitely contemplated a class of persons who are capable of this peculiar consecration, and to whom is as definitely promised the vision of Him Whom the saints desire to see. This same teacher, taking St. John as the type of the pure in heart, would seem to indicate that all Christians are given the opportunity of making by degrees a gradual and more perfect response to the Divine Call, and that, as our Lord revealed Himself to the beloved disciple in a threefold manner, as His Master, his Friend, and his God, so He still shows Himself to those who surrender themselves, not only to the joy of His friendship but also to the fellowship of His sufferings.

"As our Lord thus called St. John, He calls us out of the world. And, like His beloved disciple, the darlings of His love, sheltered in the life of the Church, hear a

gracious invitation, and so abide with Him that day and many days. But there are others with the same capacity for purity of heart, who, in sin or unbelief, have wandered far from their true home, and for these a different call is needed.

"In the frustration of hopes and ambitions, in the sudden fear that for us life has no meaning, in the realisation that death is coming, and after death the judgment, God is calling to us. We have gone on for a long way in our loves and hates, our vanities and pleasures, our imaginations and our sins, and one day the road crumbles beneath us. The beloved is dead, youth is dead, pleasure is dead. Nothing matters now. Why plan for the morrow, when the only reality is death?"

Dormer paused, moved a little, and said, still more quietly, "It is true that for us this *is* the only reality—the death of the soul."

There was no doubt about Horatia's interest now. How was it that he knew the very horror that gripped her, the fear of death, the fear of life? She held her hands tightly together in her muff, wishing with all her heart that she had listened earlier. He went on, speaking of the ways that God uses to save a soul from death, but, because of her very anxiety to hear, his utterance, exquisite as it was, dulled for a moment or two to a mere buzz in her ears. Then her senses cleared, and she heard him say:

"And, to save us from this death, it may be that God will use, as His last weapon, loneliness. In loneliness He asks us, 'What seek ye?' In loneliness we confess that we do not know His dwelling-place; in loneliness, at last, we can no longer escape the challenge of His merciful displeasure that bids us 'Come and see.' If still we hesitate, it may be our very honesty that makes

us afraid to go and see where He dwells, for if we go with Him we must admit His claim, we must acknowledge our fault, we must forgive the friend who has done us irreparable wrong, we can never be as we were before.

"But if in the Divine mercy we yield ourselves captives to His love, and loosed from sin we know Him in Whom we have believed, yet we may not rest in this, the first sight of Jesus, for, like St. John, we are called to a yet more intimate knowledge—the friendship of the Lord. And here sincerity that is to become purity will pass into singleness of heart. For if the surrender of ourselves to the Divine Will has to be made over and over again before God can be glorified in us, still our intention must be pure, our purpose must be sincere. He calls us, indeed, to communion with Himself in sacrament and prayer while as yet the work of transformation is hardly begun. And those who live with Him day by day may still be a prey to resentment and to pride, to jealousy and to ambition, and those who rest on His heart may fail to watch with Him, may even forsake Him when wicked men lay hold on Him. But if, like St. John, greatly, though dimly, desiring the Beatific Vision, they grasp the cup of His Passion, crying out that they are able to drink of it, our Lord, it may be, will take them at their word, and the power of His Cross shall do for them what the joy of His Presence could never do.

"Who are the pure in heart, and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb."

(2)

Horatia emerged with her hostess between the twisted pillars of the porch into the High, to a crowd of people, and the prospect of an Oxford Sunday such as she loved. But she would have given anything to go back, alone, into the emptying church, to pray to this new Christ, who had called her—*her*—and to Whom she had not come. But she would come, she would come, if only she could find the way. . . . "Where dwellest Thou?"

"Excuse me a moment," said Mrs. Pusey, stopping to speak to someone, and Horatia, waiting in the momentary press, heard one gentleman commoner say to another, "Couldn't make anything of the sermon. Are all your Fellows as unintelligible as that?" To which his companion, evidently an Oriel man, responded, "I don't often hear them. But I can stand 'Mercy and Judgment' because he is at least short.—By Gad, there he is, with Mr. Denison!" And he capped the two Fellows as they crossed the street. Dormer was smiling as he returned the salute.

Horatia followed them with her eyes. Did he then know the friendship of the Lord, walking in sober academic garb along an Oxford street? Could people other than those in stained glass windows, dressed in reds and blues against a background of palm-tree and lake, hear His call, know His friendship, carry His cross? . . .

"Pray forgive me!" said Mrs. Pusey's voice at her side. "Shall we go past Oriel; it is shortest. No doubt we shall encounter Edward on his way to meet us, if Cathedral is over, as I should guess it to be. Then we might perhaps take a turn in the Broad Walk. It will

do Edward good, for his health is so precarious just now that I do not know how he is to get on to the end of term."

As Horatia murmured her sympathy the two gowns disappeared under Oriel gateway.

" Where dwellest Thou ? " All through the remainder of the day the question persisted, wrecking everything she did in the pleasant, dignified atmosphere of Canon Pusey's house. Were these kind, learned people who sat round the Sunday dinner-table, were they the captives of His love ; had they been loosed from sin ? She wished that Tristram could have been there, sitting opposite to her. His familiar presence would have steadied her. Even if he knew the meaning of all these phrases there was nothing disturbing about him.

Later in the afternoon she watched Mr. Newman, the friend of the family, sitting with the two elder children on his knee, while he put his spectacles on their noses, or told them a story. What would happen if she suddenly interrupted the story with her insistent question—" Do *you* know where He dwells ? "

The interminable day came to an end at last, and she was alone in her room. Without waiting to undress she flung herself down beside the bed. " Where dwellest Thou, where dwellest Thou ? " There was no one to answer, nothing to see, only the rose and jasmine of the wall-paper, distorted through the rain of tears.

She woke next morning in a very different frame of mind, more than a little ashamed of her emotion of the day before. She might have been a Methodist ! It was not for her, this enthusiasm, and she ought not to have been so discomposed. To have been carried away,

against her will, by the words of a man whom she disliked ! She disliked, too, some of what he had said, now that more of it came back to her. Life was made for happiness ; though sorrow intruded it was an incident to be forgotten, not to be dwelt upon. Comfortably eating her breakfast in her well-appointed room she felt sure of this, and knew that she, who was certainly not ignorant of suffering, did not approve of its glorification. What did Mr. Dormer know about it ?

And yet . . . she knew that she should not forget St. Mary's.

CHAPTER VIII

(1)

Mr. Dormer of Oriel, was accustomed to assert that he felt no ill effects from his Italian carriage accident, but, as a matter of fact, he never went up or down any prolonged flight of stairs without being reminded of the slight muscular weakness which it had left. So that when, about six weeks after his sermon at St. Mary's, he came rather fast down the sixty-five steps of the Bodleian library, and at the end of every group of five arrived with some force upon his injured leg, he was so reminded.

Outside, in the archway facing the Radcliffe and St. Mary's, their gowns blown about by the wind which commonly sweeps through that passage, he came on Newman and his curate, Isaac Williams, in converse with Canon Pusey.

"Wait a minute, Dormer," exclaimed the first-named, catching at him as he was about to pass. "We are having a most interesting conversation."

"I was just saying to Mr. Newman," said the Canon, smiling and wrapping his gown round him after a habit he had, "that I think you are all too hard upon the Evangelicals. You should conciliate the Peculiars, as you would call them. I am thinking of writing a letter myself for that purpose."

"Were you!" exclaimed Newman. "Well, suppose you let us have that for one of the Tracts?"

The young Regius Professor smiled his particularly sweet smile. " Oh, no ! " he replied, " I will not be one of you ! " and they all moved out of the archway together, Dormer taking the opportunity to ask Isaac Williams for news of Keble.

Meanwhile Newman seemed to be arguing with his friend, and at last, as they stood on the steps, he could be heard saying, " Suppose you let us have that letter of yours, which you intend writing, and attach your own name or signature to it ? You would then not be mixed up with us, or be in any way responsible for the Tracts."

" Well," said Pusey after a little hesitation, " if you will let me do that I will."

He gave them a smiling farewell, and went off, in his usual rather abstracted fashion, down Brasenose Lane.

" Come out with me to Littlemore, Dormer," urged Newman. " It is a beautiful day. Isaac has some business of his own, I don't know what, in Oxford. Come along, and we will sing pæans of thanksgiving for the great victory obtained by the Apostolicals over the Regius Professor of Hebrew."

And he set out with his curious swift gait, as if walking in heelless slippers, along the side of All Souls, where two years ago a daring hand had painted " No Bristol Riots."

" I must write to Froude at once," he continued. " How I wish we dared take his advice and throw the Establishment men overboard ! I am sure that if he knew the trouble I have had with that good Palmer, on the question of continuing the Tracts, he would pity me."

" If Pusey should end by casting in his lot with us," observed Dormer thoughtfully, " it might make a difference."

" You mean that if we had him we could venture to

row our own little boat, because he could be all that Rose might be ? "

" Well, yes, with his influence and his easy relations with the University authorities.—Excuse me a moment, there's Mr. Grenville of Compton Regis. I must just go across."

For they had by this time come abreast of the *Angel* in High Street, where an elderly cleric was about to enter a post-chaise.

" Ah, Mr. Dormer," said the Rector heartily, " That's very kind of you to come and speak to an old man. I'm just returned from a jaunt, I suppose you may call it, to London, to my sister-in-law's. Oxford is looking its best this morning. Yes, thanks, I'm very well, too, although I am so bombarded with these Tracts—rather a turning of the tables, you know, for we clergy are more accustomed to distributing than to receiving such things. And I ought to obtain a meed of praise from you, too, for I have just arranged a meeting next week, to get signatures to the address to the Archbishops—though I think it rather a milk-and-water thing myself . . . Well, good-day."

" I hope Madame de la Roche-Guyon is well," observed Dormer, in the tones of convention, as he opened the chaise door for him.

" Yes, quite well, thank you," replied the Rector, his foot on the step. He hesitated, withdrew that member, and glancing round lowered his voice to a confidential tone : " When I see how she welcomes *our friend's* visits, I really begin to hope that it will all come right in the end ! So perhaps what has happened has been for the best ! " His face beamed. " How little we trust in Providence, Mr. Dormer ! But there, I mustn't keep you. Good-day ! "

John Henry Newman had a rather silent companion on his walk to Littlemore.

(2)

The chaise conveying Mr. Grenville from Oxford to Compton was, unknown to Tristram, but a few miles in advance of him as he trotted along the frosty Berkshire lanes that afternoon, revolving in his mind the points in his tract on "The Church the Home of the Poor," of which he had left the proofs with Horatia—proofs which he was going to reclaim before he left next week for a "missionary tour" in Northamptonshire on business connected with the Tracts.

Last Christmas, when he had come to think over his afternoon at Compton, he knew that he would rather not see Horatia often. And a gradual abstention would have been possible, though a little awkward, but the Rector had insisted so much on the cheering effect of his visits, and the necessity for Horatia of some outside interest that, as always where she was concerned, he allowed his own feelings to be overridden. This was not the time to consider himself, when she was in a situation so poignantly pathetic, and when, for the first time in his life, he was really able to be of some use to her. That there should be any talk in the neighbourhood about his going to the Rectory seemed very unlikely, seeing that it had been a second home to him since boyhood. Had he suddenly kept away, there might have been something to talk about. And that there should be any wrong impression left upon her mind was quite unthinkable after he had once seen her. Never, in her teasing days, had she seemed so remote as now in her kindness, and her sadness and her motherhood.

Nearly always, when he got back to Oxford, one or other of the different strands of pain would ache almost unbearably, but since the call to arms in July, and still more since the forging of weapons was begun in September, this great interest which she shared with him had made things easier for him. His going out there was no longer an emotional strain, but almost a soldier's visit to a comrade at an outpost, woman though she was. And this was indeed the spirit in which he rode out to her to day to reclaim his proofs.

But Mr. Grenville, blowing his nose very hard, met him in the hall. "Horatia is greatly distressed," he said huskily. "She has had sad news from France. I've only just got back myself and heard it. That child —but there, I think you had better go in to her."

In the dining-room, her head on the table, which was strewn with sewing materials, Horatia was crying as if her heart would break.

"It is poor little Claude-Edmond," she said between her sobs. "He's dead . . . poor darling . . . poor dear little boy . . ." And she broke into fresh weeping.

"Dead!" exclaimed Tristram horrified. "Emmanuel's son—that little fellow! How . . ."

She could give him no answer for a moment, and in that pause, rent with sobbing, he knew without acknowledging it that the sight of her grief meant immeasurably more to him than its cause. He could not bear to see her cry!

After a moment she raised her head and dabbed at her eyes, and lifted them, all reddened and swollen, to his.

"You remember him, Tristram—such a dear little boy, so solemn and polite? He was riding in the Bois de Boulogne a few days ago when his horse took fright,

and he was thrown—against a tree . . . He only lived a few hours. . . . O Tristram, when I think . . . and he was such a comfort to me once . . . and they say he asked for me . . . I can't bear it!"

And during this short recital of that almost intolerable tragedy, a child's death, every vestige of colour ebbed from Tristram's face. Before she had ended he had turned it from her.

"And does this . . . this very sad news . . . will it make any difference to you, Horatia?"

"Any difference?" repeated she, not catching his real meaning, so completely was she absorbed in thoughts of the dead boy. "Oh, you mean Maurice being the heir now." Utterance failed her and she began to cry again. "O, I can't bear to think of it!"

"Yes," said Tristram's voice, curiously insistent and toneless, "but will it make any difference to you personally . . . will you have to go away—to live in France? I thought perhaps . . ."

"No, O, no, I don't think so." She sighed heavily. "I can do as I please, I think. I suppose I shall be there more often, perhaps . . . O Tristram, why is God so cruel?"

He did not take up the challenge, but he looked at her very gravely.

"I do not know," he said. "I . . . I must go back and write to poor Emmanuel. I will come for those proofs again, or you can send them. I am going away next week . . . when I come back, perhaps . . ."

The Oxford road saw that evening the return of a man who, in all good faith, had attempted a task beyond his strength, and who was now paying bitterly enough for the discovery.

CHAPTER IX

(I)

From the bottom of Maurice's crib, wherein he lay fast asleep, his favourite rag soldier, sitting propped against the rails, stared at him reproachfully, for the little boy had taken to bed with him, against all precedent, an old black and white wooden horse, long discarded, whose hairless head now lay nose to nose on the pillow with his own. The rag soldier probably felt his world tumbling around him.

And, indeed, the whole night-nursery was rather topsy-turvy. Maurice's bath things were not cleared away, though the water was long cold, and in the midst of downflung towels, soap, sponge and powder-puffs, sat his mother herself, doing nothing. It was she who was responsible for the disorder, for that dislocation in fact of the whole day which had been so pleasant to Maurice. He was certainly not likely to complain when, after breakfast, Mamma had sent Martha away and announced that she was going to have him to herself, for a special reason. The reason was less than nothing to Maurice, but the fact was delightful, implying a free hand with the coal-box, while Mamma, instead of wanting to change his frock, kept herself quiet with a piece of paper covered with black marks, on which she from time to time let fall those tears which Maurice himself could produce, though seldom so silently. The culmination of being bathed by Mamma had led to a

great deal of splashing, and to the exhibition, which Martha would never let him complete, of his powers of drinking water from his sponge. That his mother was quite incapable of clearing up the mess which he and she had made together was not likely to trouble him either, indeed he fell asleep too soon to realise this deficiency.

And Horatia sat in the midst of the confusion, her eyes full of tears, her chin on her hand, watching the sleeping child. She could not get poor little Claude-Edmond out of her head. Most clearly of all she remembered him at Plaisance, confiding to her his desire to resemble Armand, to be able to ride, to fence. . . . Now they would neither of them ever ride again. . . . And the death of the little boy had thrown across her own life a shadow not only of regret, but of menace. For in her lap lay the testimony to the triumph of the indomitable spirit of an old lady over the Code Napoléon, under whose ægis Horatia had fondly imagined herself and Maurice to be sheltering.

The letter had come yesterday morning, the third day after her interview with Tristram. It was quite simple. The Duchesse's lawyer wrote that his venerable client was about to make her will for the last time, a course necessitated by the recent unfortunate death of the little heir. As Madame la Comtesse was no doubt aware, the ancient and noble family of La Roche-Guyon was extremely impoverished. Nothing indeed but the great private fortune of the Dowager Duchess had enabled it to keep up the appearance due to its rank. The bulk of this fortune the Duchesse was now proposing to settle upon the child of her late dearly-beloved younger grandson—on one condition. Madame la Comtesse must renounce entirely her plan

of bringing him up in England; with or without her he must return to France by the time he was five—though in deference to the last wishes of her dear grandson he should be allowed to pass some years at an English school. But he must be brought up as a Frenchman, as the heir of the family which he would one day represent, and Madame la Comtesse was to signify her willingness to return to Paris for three or four months as early as possible in the New Year. If she refused to comply with these conditions the Duchesse's money, after the deaths of her son and elder grandson, would be left to distant relatives of her own family, and the future Duc de la Roche-Guyon would find himself the almost penniless inheritor of his great name and position.

Stunning though this ultimatum was, it had not taken Horatia long to decide that Maurice must go. She could not be the means of beggaring her child. He must go—but was she to go too? It was true that the Duchesse had not had the brutality to suggest an immediate separation from his mother, but the two years and ten months which lay between him and his fifth birthday would soon pass. If she went, good-bye to all her old home life, taken up again and found so peaceful and so dear; good-bye to her father who had recovered her with so much joy.

And good-bye to Tristram. . . . .

But if she stayed, good-bye to that head of curls on the pillow. O no, no, she could never do that! She slipped to her knees and clutched at the cot rails. "My darling! I could not! I could not!"

And yet, on the other side of the crib seemed to stand Tristram, looking at her as he had looked three mornings ago, his voice fallen to that strange tone,

" Will it make any difference to you, Horatia ? " the only real evidence that she had of his wanting her—since his visits and his obvious pleasure in them could all be accounted for by their long friendship—but evidence enough. Yes, it had actually come to the choice, all unforeseen, between her child and the man . . . she loved. The issue must be decided, too, within a week, for the Duchesse insisted on an immediate answer. This was why she had spent the day with Maurice, " to help her to decide "—a proceeding not free from the charge of indulgence in sentiment.

(2)

And yet she had not made up her mind when she heard her father, who had been out all day, coming heavily up the nursery stairs.

" My dear," he said, astonished, " why are you up here alone ? Martha is wandering about outside waiting to come in to you. It is too much for you to do all this for the child by yourself, and why should you ? "

To which his daughter responded, in an appealing tone not far from tears," O Papa, I can't leave him, I can't leave him ! "

" Well, my dear," remarked Mr. Grenville, approaching the crib, " you can leave him now, at any rate, for he is fast asleep, and Martha can sit with him instead of catching cold on the landing. Come, come, we will go down into the library and leave her to clear up. Yes, come in ! " And as Martha entered and fell to work on the disorder he put Horatia's hand through his arm and led her out.

In the library she settled down in her favourite attitude on a stool at his feet, and for a time nothing much

was said, except that the Rector, as he stroked her hair, would mutter, " It is very hard, very difficult, my love," and, at intervals, " I should never have expected it of them, never ! "

At last Horatia broke out passionately, "I can't let Maurice be a pauper ! He will have to go, and I—I think I must go with him." With that she escaped from her father's caress, and putting her head in her hands began to cry.

The Rector got up, found a box of Prometheans, went successfully through the process of pinching out the sulphuric acid, at the end, on to the chlorate of potash and sugar (in which he generally burnt his fingers), obtained a flame and lit a couple of candles. Then he sighed heavily, sat down again, and drawing his chair up close to Horatia took hold of a hand and made her rest her head on his knee.

"Now, my dearest child," he began, "I am going to speak very plainly to you. I do not think these tears are for me. No, don't say anything about that ! It's all quite right. I should not wish them to be. I think Tristram is at the bottom of this."

For answer he saw her getting crimson behind the ears, and heard her murmur faintly, " O Papa ! "

" Well, my dear, it's very right and natural, and nothing to be ashamed of. I have thought that I have seen signs, for some time, and I have been very thankful, very thankful. He is the right husband for you."

" I thought, Papa," came a stifled voice, " that you did not approve of second marriages."

" Perhaps not," replied the Rector, " but this is different, and Tristram has wanted you all his life."

" But how do I know that he wants me now ? "

"That," said the Rector with conviction, "is very

apparent ; in fact, I was on the verge of speaking to him about it last week."

" Papa ! " ejaculated his daughter, sitting up.

" Yes, we understand one another," went on Mr. Grenville, smiling, for there was unmistakably more pleasure than horror in her protest. " I have known more about all this, my dear, than you have. You never knew, because Tristram would not allow me to tell you, but he was going to propose to you, the very week that poor Armand came to visit him."

" Tristram was going to propose to me again," said Horatia slowly, " and yet he made the way easy for me to marry Armand ! "

" One of his extraordinary notions, my dear. ' If she wanted the moon, I would get it for her,' he said. I have often thought that it was not for nothing that he had a fanatic for a father. He is one in a thousand, but of course, before now, he has seemed to me unnecessarily quixotic. I have meant to tell you this, Horatia, but I thought things were best without my interference. Still it is but right, now that the crisis has come, for you to know all that I do. It is my belief that Tristram is only hindered at this very moment from speaking by some idea of propriety. Or perhaps he feels that his prospects are not yet assured. Still, it is clear that he must declare himself in the near future, unless he wants to lose you altogether. If only it were possible to give him a little encouragement ! "

" *I* couldn't give him encouragement ! " exclaimed Horatia in a tone of horror.

" I was not suggesting such a thing for a moment, my love. I was only saying *if* it were possible. I feel something could be done, ought to be done . . . Let me see, how much time have we ? "

Horatia had twisted round on her footstool and was now facing him with flushed cheeks. " A week. And, O Papa, even if he did . . . if he wanted me to marry him, how could I let Maurice go without me ? "

The Rector bent forward. He had the air of thorough and pleasurable mastery of the situation.

" My dear, let us be quite clear about that anyhow ! I'm as fond of the boy as if he were my own, but I think you would do very wrong to deprive him of a stepfather like Tristram. After all, if you take him to France for a few months next year you may keep him until he is five years old. It was the Jesuits who said, ' Give us a child until he is five and we will make anything of him.' (No, now I come to think of it, it is ' until he is seven,' but no matter.) Very well then, until that age you and Tristram can bring him up, and you see already how he takes to Tristram. After that the parting will be hard for you, I do not doubt, but the time will soon come for him to return to England to school, and, if you agree in the main to the conditions, the Duchesse is not likely to wish to drive such a hard bargain that you cannot occasionally have him for his holidays . . . Besides, we may hope that you will have other children."

" Papa, do you really mean all this ? " asked Horatia thoughtfully. " I have never looked at it in that light."

" I do indeed mean it, but the question is, what is to be done ? There is not too much time," said the Rector, pursing his lips. " This needs careful consideration." And, apparently, he considered, and Horatia too. At any rate she was silent, looking into the fire.

Finally Mr. Grenville gave an exclamation. " I have it ! Did you not say, my dear, that you had to send back a proof of Tristram's to him ? What more natural than to enclose the letter from the Duchesse's lawyer, and say

that you would value his advice, or something of the sort ? "

Horatia turned over and over the locket with the little curl of Maurice's hair that she wore.

Then she said, very quietly, " Yes, I will do it."

(3)

" My dear Horatia,

"I feel with you very much in the difficulty of the decision. It will be hard for the Rector to part with you again so soon, but I know you both too well to imagine that you can hesitate for long where Maurice's interests are concerned.

"For myself, I need not say how, after this year of renewed friendship, I shall miss your help and sympathy, but I have come to feel that my life is not my own. Wherever you go, whatever you do, may God bless you always !—T.H."

This was the letter which Horatia received at breakfast four mornings later, and which lay in her pocket all through that meal and for some time afterwards, not because she did not wish her father to see it, since he was away for the night, but because she dared not open it. In her own room, the door locked, she read it at last, once not understanding, the second time unbelieving, the third time understanding too well.

Then it dropped from the hands which she raised to hide the scorching blush that, though she was alone, spread itself from the nape of her neck to the roots of her hair, and that seemed to run like a wave of fire over her whole body. He had refused her ! Under the guise of asking advice from a friend, she, Horatia de la Roche-Guyon—Horatia Grenville—had, practically,

offered herself to a man, and he had refused her ! And this man was Tristram !

After a few minutes, red and white by turns, she took up the letter again, and, reading it for the fourth time, she received yet a new impression. This did not seem to be Tristram at all who wrote to her ; it was like the voice of someone else, or, rather, it was as though a veil hung between her and the man who had penned those words—words which, as she could see, had been chosen to spare her, words which made no reference to what the writer must have known was in her mind. But they were final enough, in all conscience !

She put the letter down on her dressing-table. Yes, that was what it was like—a dictated letter, a letter which another person had made him write. . . .

There was something that she did not understand. She got up and began to walk about the room, the first biting shame of the repulse a little blunted by contact with her own imperious temper and by a certain bewilderment. She had a feeling that there was, somewhere, what her father would have called " hokey-pokey." And, as she arrived at that conclusion, she saw it all in a flash, and wondered how she could have been so stupid. Tristram had of course been " got hold of " by the Oriel people and had swallowed their ridiculous ideas on celibacy. That was what he meant by writing that he had come to feel his life not his own. That was, no doubt, the sort of thing they said, and that they had taught him to say ; it was all a part of that miserable glorification of suffering as a part of Christianity at which her whole soul revolted.

Horatia stopped, her eyes shining with anger. Illogically enough, though she had endured many qualms since sending her letter, the receipt of his

refusal made her quite sure that the real Tristram himself wanted to marry her, that " they " were preventing him. Well, they should see !

She carried this fighting mood about with her for an hour or so while she ordered the household and visited Maurice, who this morning was greatly intrigued by the presence of frost on the window-pane, a phenomenon, like many others, still strange to him. But all the while she was conscious that the spirit of resistance was slowly slipping away from her. At half-past ten she returned to her room, took out the letter and read it again, and thereafter sat a long time thinking.

No, it was not so simple. Something much more was here than the combatting of the influence of others. One thing, if one alone in life, the most ardent fighter should shrink from lifting sword against, a man's conscience. Had she not recently felt the reawakened stirrings of her own ? And in this matter, however it came there, was some deep conviction of Tristram's. He could not, otherwise, have written so.

And a great and sad tenderness fell on her as, thinking of him whom she knew so well, she began to realise what he must be suffering at having to answer her thus. She forgot for a time her own shame and anger, and thought only of his long, unwavering, selfless devotion, that would do anything in the world for her, so as it was not against his conscience. Could not she, then, who had never, perhaps, been anything but a source of pain to him, could not she do something for him—take the disturbing element of herself out of his life, because, for his real happiness, she would be better gone, and go, without an attempt to hold him, to that other life where duty was calling her ? . . . The way was open, if she were strong enough to follow it.

But she must be sure that such a renunciation would be for Tristram's happiness. She must be sure that he really had this conviction. In her present mood she could almost have gone and asked Tristram himself, had she not known that he was away from Oxford. And the time was drawing very near when she must answer the Duchesse's letter.

But there was one person who could probably tell her as well as Tristram himself—Mr. Dormer, if he had not gone down. She could not write to him on such a matter. She would have to go and see him. The unusualness of the step gave her only a momentary pause. Even though it were not proper for her, a young woman—if a widow—to go and call on an unmarried man in his College rooms she did not care. At the worst she could get the Puseys to ask him to Christ Church and she could talk to him there. But she knew that only the most direct method would really satisfy her. The matter was too pressing and too desperate to admit of considering the proprieties.

Nevertheless, some three hours later, as she followed the porter across the quadrangle at Oriel, she was already regretting her precipitancy, and it was with a throbbing heart that she heard him announce her name in the mangled fashion to which she was becoming accustomed in England.

But the room was empty. It was undeniable relief, and had the porter, apologising for his mistake, not adjured her to take a seat, as Mr. Dormer could not be long, she would have brought out the words of excuse already on her lips and fled. But that everyday form—its visage not untouched by curiosity—was a barrier to

escape more effectual than any sword-girt angel, and she obeyed.

So she was left, with a sulky little fire for company, to wait. For some time she was too restless to sit down, and wandered between the fireplace and the window. The room did not strike her as uncomfortable, and it was very orderly, except for the big table in the middle, which was strewn with books and papers, as if the occupant had been interrupted in his work. There was a good deal of old furniture, some of it beautiful, and the walls could not look bare, for they were almost completely lined with books. Indeed the only picture that she noticed was an engraving over the hearth of Velasquez' Christ on the Cross, straight and stark against its background of more than night, the face shadowed by the falling hair. Horatia felt suddenly afraid, she knew not of what, and going as far as possible from the print, sat down by the window.

The only thing that comforted her was the sight of some Christmas roses in a saucer, standing among the books and papers, close to their owner's chair.

CHAPTER X

DORMER, in academical dress was entering under Oriel gateway when the porter accosted him.

" If you please, Sir, there's a lady waiting to see you in your rooms. She asked for you, and thinking you was there I showed her up. A French name, I fancy."

The young Fellow mechanically took the card held out to him. "A French name" could announce only one lady. But on what errand had she come ? For the first time in his life he was afraid. Then he set his face like a flint and crossed the quadrangle towards his staircase.

And in his sitting-room, in the low chair by the window where, in his time at least, no woman had ever sat, very pale, clad in black but wearing costly furs, with the light on her hair, was the woman who had wasted Tristram's years, and whose happiness was always to be bought at the cost of his.

" I must apologise for keeping you waiting, Madam," he said coldly, as he closed the door. " Please do not move ! The porter told me you were here." He laid his cap on the table. " There is something particular that you wish to see me about ? "

" Yes," said Horatia, " there is something that I have come to ask you." She turned her head and glanced out of the window, and then looked again at her host, standing with exceeding stiffness in his gown and hood. " But now that I am here I hardly know how to put it into words."

" If I can be of any assistance please do not hesitate," observed Dormer with icy politeness, and then, seeing that she did not speak, he sat down by the side of his big table and looked away. He felt miserably sure that she had come to say something about Tristram, but that, being a lady, she would not reach the point for another half-hour or so. He was therefore entirely taken by surprise when he heard her say, after a moment:

" I am going to ask you a very extraordinary question, Mr. Dormer. I want you to tell me if Tristram—if Mr. Hungerford has come to think that it is better for the clergy not to marry ? "

Startled though he was, Dormer fell instantly on guard. " Is not that a question, Madam," he returned, " which it would be better for you to ask Mr. Hungerford himself ? "

" Could I bring myself to that," assented Horatia, " it would be better."

" He is not in Oxford at present, I know," suggested Dormer, " but he will be back by the sixteenth."

" I must know before that," said Horatia gravely.

And Dormer had a sudden temptation. He felt more sure than ever that Tristram had got himself into a tangle. Here and now he could probably cut it for him. But he would not play Providence. It was one thing to warn Tristram, quite another to extricate him behind his back and without his consent . . . So his tone was even colder than before as he said, " If the matter is urgent I regret that I cannot help you, but I think you can understand that I am unwilling to discuss my friend's affairs, even with another of his friends." And he rose, as if to intimate that the interview was over.

But his visitor did not rise. On the contrary she said, with warmth, " Yes, I quite see that, but . . ." She

bit her lip. " If you knew, you would not be so punctilious, Mr. Dormer. Will you not let me tell you ? "

" Really," said Dormer, hesitating a trifle, " I hardly know what to say, but I would much rather not be the recipient of any confidences. Surely, Madam, the matter is not so pressing but that you can wait for Tristram's return."

Horatia laughed rather bitterly.

" Mr. Dormer, you need not be so much afraid. We will not speak of Tristram then. If you will tell me your own views on the subject it will be quite enough. It is not easy for me to come to you—you must know that ! I only do it because . . . O, well, that does not matter."

Dormer sat down with a resigned sigh by the side of the table, and said briefly, " Please tell me anything you wish."

" Thank you," said Horatia ; collected herself and started. " I am afraid I must trouble you with some personal details. You probably know that a good many years ago Tristram asked me to marry him. I was singularly young and foolish, and I refused him. You may also know that, as I have learnt quite recently, he was on the verge of asking me again in the autumn of 1830." Dormer inclined his head. " What my answer would have been I do not know. But shortly afterwards I married my late husband. Our marriage was an unhappy one."

Here she came to a full stop, and got no help from her listener, who was looking down at an ink-pot.

" It was largely my own fault, but I have suffered, and if ever anyone wanted to forget the past I have wanted to forget it." For a second her voice trembled, then it recovered. " In my old home again, with my

father, it seemed sometimes as if I should succeed. And although Tristram was changed, yet he was the same, and latterly it has seemed to me that he was indeed the same, and that . . . it is very difficult for me to tell you . . ."

Dormer looked up. "I think I can understand," he said, with something different in his voice.

"Thank you. I was right . . . and I was wrong. I cannot explain it, but I must just ask you to believe that I was not utterly blinded by vanity, and on the other hand that Tristram did and said nothing that could not be accounted for by his long and extraordinary friendship."

"That is quite easy for me to believe," replied Dormer; but he seemed to have a slight difficulty in speaking.

"The end came a week ago," pursued Horatia. And she explained, as shortly as she could, the bombshell which the Dowager Duchesse had cast into her plans, finishing by saying, "I felt almost confident that Tristram only waited for some sign from me . . . and yet I could not bring myself to give it. But time was pressing, and I must decide about the boy. My father urged me to send the letter I had received to Tristram, and to ask his advice. It . . . it was . . . unusual, I know . . . but I did so—and this morning I received his answer. I think you had better read it."

Dormer got up and took with obvious reluctance the paper which she held out to him. He read it, flushed violently, and became very pale.

"I don't want you to say anything," said Horatia hurriedly. "When I got this letter this morning I saw it all in a flash. It has only needed your hesitation to make me quite sure that I was right. From time to

time I have heard the views of his friends here at Oriel about the marriage of the clergy, but somehow—it was stupid of me—it never occurred to me that he shared them. But that of course is the key to the situation. He is bound by some vow not to marry."

Her hearer during this speech had stationed himself by the fire, his head bent, with a hand on the high mantelshelf; his arm, in consequence, hid his face. She could not even see it now, as he said, in a voice noticeably less hostile. "There I think you are wrong. As I see now that it is quite unnecessary for me to keep anything from you, I can tell you that, to my knowledge, he has never taken any kind of vow, but that, even before his ordination as priest, he had a solemn intention to embrace the life of sacrifice to the glory of God. But it was a solemn intention, not a vow."

"Intention or vow," returned Horatia, "it would be all the same to Tristram. And please do not speak to me of sacrifice and the glory of God! I do not believe that the Creator is glorified by the self-inflicted suffering of His creatures. But if you speak to me of Tristram's happiness, or of his conscience, which is more than happiness to him, then I can understand you."

"You are right about Tristram's conscience," said Tristram's friend.

"Yet I believe that I can still bring him back to me if I choose to," said Horatia rather defiantly. The challenge drew from Charles Dormer a bow which was more eloquent than many words.

"But I do not mean to try," she finished. "I am quite sure that Tristram is deluded, yet if this delusion has become a matter of conscience with him, he would not long remain happy with me. What I want to find out is how firmly he is fixed in this idea, and how he

would look at his action later on if he married me. This is where you can help me, Mr. Dormer, for I know that you are his second self. In the end he would come to think as you think now. I want you to tell me, first, if in your opinion it would ever be right to go back upon what you call a solemn intention ? "

Dormer saw now that he was being forced into the position which he had a short time ago rejected almost with regret—that of an executioner. Now, strangely enough he hated it.

" Yes," he said, " from our point of view it would be right . . . under certain circumstances."

" And would you think," asked Horatia, looking down and hesitating, " would you consider the fact that I have become a widow since his resolve was taken an exceptional circumstance ? "

" I am afraid," replied Dormer reluctantly, " that it would entirely depend on how far Tristram had committed himself already to the idea of the single life. You see it is impossible for me to discuss this from any but what I am sure you would call a fanatical standpoint." He smiled fleetingly, without mirth.

" But supposing he was committed very far . . . would it be right to . . . to go back ? "

It had to be done. " No," said Dormer in a low voice. " No, I am afraid it would not."

(2)

Across the silence there came a faint clattering sound, probably a tray from the buttery being taken to someone's rooms. Stillness fell again. Then the voice of an undergraduate not yet gone down was heard inquiring in a shout what that ass Simpson had done

with his carpet bag. Horatia got up from her chair and began to pull down her veil.

"I do not think you need be afraid of me any longer," she said with a sort of smile. "There is only one way for me to answer the Duchesse's letter. Thank you for speaking so plainly to me. You have been very patient, and I am more than grateful. Would you have the goodness to send to see if my carriage is at the gate?"

She stooped for her muff, which had slipped to the floor, but, hearing no movement, glanced round and saw Dormer still standing between the table and the hearth, blocking her exit, his eyes fixed on her. And as with a faint surprise she gazed at him he seemed to alter. The sternness had gone from his face; it looked, if possible, still more sad, but she could hardly believe that this was the man against whom, for the last half-hour, she had been fighting. And she heard him say, with singular gentleness—

"'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' May our Lord of His great mercy comfort you!"

"Don't, don't say that sort of thing to me!" exclaimed Horatia. "I am doing nothing at all heroic. It is only necessity. It has nothing to do with God or religion, or because I believe for one moment in Tristram's foolish ideas—it is because . . . because . . ." It was impossible to go on, for his voice had touched some secret spring in her, some deep-buried self which, suddenly released, was struggling to respond—as once before, at the same voice, it had struggled in St. Mary's. She sat down again and hid her face in her hands.

"Because," said Dormer, still more gently, "you have found out the secret of love—the willingness to go without the beloved for the beloved's sake."

" I do not know what I have found out," said Horatia after a moment, passing her handkerchief over her eyes. " I am only following an instinct. I mean to go back to France, and after that . . . I don't care much what happens." She paused again. " With Tristram I should have been safe. He was my hope. I know I have done wrong, very wrong, but am I never to be forgiven, never to be allowed to forget the past?—O!" she broke out passionately, " your God is a cruel God! He is cruel to Tristram and to me. I don't believe what you said in your sermon about suffering—I can't believe it and I won't believe it! . . . Why are you making me talk to you?"

" Because I want to help you. Will you not let me try—for Tristram's sake?"

Horatia looked at him for a moment, then she rose and went to the window. When she turned round again, some three minutes later, the buried self had won, and, not ungenerous in victory, had given her composure for its purpose.

" You are the only person who could help me," she said very simply. " But it is such a long story, and I ought not to take up your time."

" I have plenty of time," replied Dormer with equal simplicity. " If you will sit down, and tell me what you can, I daresay I can fill in the gaps."

" I thought my marriage was the . . . the 'vision splendid,'" began Horatia after a little, " I was mistaken; but there was still something remaining, only I was exacting and foolish, and refused to make the best of what I had . . . At last I heard two miserable women speaking of the infidelity of my husband, and the name coupled with his was . . . that of my greatest friend. There were proofs with which I need

not trouble you . . . I taxed him with it, but he denied it. I would not believe him. I told him I hated him and his child. It was then that Maurice was born. For many weeks I visited my hatred of my husband on the child. For a long time I would not let them bring my baby near me . . . and I definitely refused to believe my husband, who still protested his innocence, or to have anything more to do with him. I "—her voice began to falter—" practically drove him from me to do the very thing of which I had falsely accused him. . . . I think I lost all faith in God, and I believe that I wished to die."

" It would be at that time," asked Dormer, to help her, " that Tristram and I came to see you ? "

" Yes . . . and that was somehow . . . a turning point for me. During the cholera I was away with Maurice, and it was then that I began to be a little sorry. I think I meant to take Armand back into favour by degrees. But when I returned to Paris he had already left for Vendée. Soon afterwards I heard that the rising had proved a failure, and that he was in hiding. I followed as quickly as I could to our house in the country . . . and it was there that the news was brought to me that he had been shot."

" By the Orleanists ? "

" Yes." Horatia hesitated. " He . . . he was shot in saving the life of that lady . . . who was never what I thought her. His death prevented that."

" How do you know this ? "

" Because in his delirium I heard everything."

" You were with him when he died ? "

Horatia made a great effort. " Yes. My friend . . . whom he loved . . . whom he would have married had he not met me . . . took him dying

to her house . . . and sent for me to be with him at the last."

" Yes ? " said Dormer.

And Horatia went on, more and more agitated. " I shall see him lying in that bed fighting with death until I die . . . and it was I who sent him to his death . . . it was my hardness that drove him to someone who really loved him. . . . And . . . and," she choked down a sob, " it was for her that he died . . . not for me."

She came to a full stop.

" Yes, I see," said the priest, but in the tone of one who thinks there is more to come.

Horatia went on again, almost inaudibly. " I hear him crying out, in the night when I wake, ' Leave your scruples, Laurence, she does not believe me,' and then again, ' Why do you send for Horatia . . . she would not care . . . I am nothing to her now ; she told me so.'"

Her listener had himself put his hand over his eyes, but he gave no sign, and at last Horatia finished.

" He would not forgive me . . . he said there was nothing to forgive . . . and I have felt—I still feel —that God has not forgiven me, that He has punished me, and that He will go on punishing me."

She had been speaking in a very low voice, and there was now hardly a sound outside. Inside the room there was the sort of silence that could be cut. It might have been lasting for centuries or for seconds—Horatia could not tell—when Dormer broke it.

" I will not ask you if you have been able to forgive that unhappy lady, who you say was once your friend, but are you able sometimes to feel compassion for her ? "

" I doubt if I know what you mean by forgiveness," answered Horatia. " I only know that once, perhaps,

I hoped that she might suffer, because I had suffered so much, and that now I cannot bear to think of what she is doing at this moment."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I did not tell you. I was staying some weeks ago with a friend in Devonshire, and we had to take a letter to a convent near, a convent of French nuns. There was a novice scrubbing some flags; she did not see me, but I saw her, and it was Laurence, Laurence whom I had not seen since . . . since . . ."

"I understand."

"Laurence," went on Horatia fiercely, "who was more sinned against than sinning. . . . Yes, I know that now! I have always known it, but I tried to excuse my husband. Laurence was rich and admired, and could have everything she wanted, and now she has not enough to eat, and she does menial work, and spends hours in prayer—and all for Armand's soul. It is an order of perpetual intercession. And I who was his wife—I am feeling that life holds very little for me because I cannot marry Tristram! What is there to forgive now!"

"I should not be quite prepared to say that," replied Dormer, looking rather staggered, "but I am quite certain of one thing. If you have been able to forgive so wholeheartedly the irreparable injury done to you, I do not think that you will have long to wait for the assurance of your own forgiveness." He hesitated, as if he were not sure whether he should say more, and taking up one of the Christmas roses from the saucer, looked at it intently for a moment. Then he went on, "You understand, do you not, that the power of the keys is in the Church of England, and that those who cannot quiet their own consciences (as the Exhortation says)

have a right to avail themselves of it. I think you should do so. That God has forgiven you I have no doubt, but even if after absolution you should have to wait for that conviction, you will be able to take it as your penance, remembering that the forgiven soul does not want to escape, it longs for the cleansing fires which alone can fit it for the presence of its Lord."

"I should deserve to wait for the feeling of forgiveness, but am I to think that this also is the penalty of sin, that God is pursuing me and tracking me down? He is taking Tristram from me; what more does He want?"

Dormer leant forward, and spoke very quietly, but with great intensity. "It is you yourself that He wants. He is stripping you of everything because by love or by fear He will save you. From all eternity you have belonged to the God Who died for you. Everything in your life and in your circumstances has existed in order to bring you nearer to Him. Even now, when you have misused His gifts, your sin and your suffering can be turned by His mercy into the means of bringing you back to Him. But it is on one condition. You must submit. You must give up your will to Him."

"But how can I give up my will, when all my life I have followed my own way?"

"Our Lord will show you how, if you ask Him. He will teach you by degrees, do not doubt that."

"I think I hardly understand what you mean," said Horatia with great hesitation, "but if I pray to be able to do this, will He—will our Lord save me from myself, and shall I in the end find rest?"

Dormer did not answer at once. He looked up (it seemed to Horatia unconsciously) at the print over the hearth, and she heard him sigh.

" Yes, He will save you, but it will be by the Cross ; for it is only in the Cross that there is safety, and in the Cross that there is rest. If you go back to France, and bring up your son in the best traditions of his family, your life will be full, and not empty. That is where you must look for comfort. Think of what it means to have a child, your own child, to give back to God. It is a high vocation and peace waits for you. I think God has sent you a child to show you where to find it."

As he went to open the door for her she said, " Mr. Dormer, there is something else . . . I should like you to feel that you can say anything—I mean that you can tell Tristram anything about me which you think can help him. It is worse for him than for me. I shall write to him, of course, but you will know what to say. . . . He will be so . . . so hurt."

CHAPTER XI

(1)

THE stone-rimmed basin in the old Physic Garden, fringed with a few yellowing reeds, held water that seemed as black as night, water that reflected, clear and blacker still, the bare interlaced boughs of a great tree beside it. And in this dark net, like a silver fish entangled in waterweeds, lay the shining half-moon, brilliant already, though it was only half-past four of a December afternoon. It was an afternoon, too, of extraordinary radiance, as if to mark that herald day of Christmas when the longing of the Church, no more to be suppressed, bursts through the monitory thoughts of Advent, in pure joy and expectation, with the first of the great antiphons of Magnificat, and hails as the Eternal Wisdom the Child so soon to come.

But there was nothing of this in the heart of the man who sat, his head in his hands, on a seat by the little pond. Reading, an hour ago, in his lodgings, the letter which he had just returned from Northamptonshire to find, he had felt that he must get out, away—anywhere—and pulsing up the narrow, screaming High Street of St. Thomas's, past the Castle keep, had come, through St. Ebbe's, full on to the front of Christ Church, looking, in the golden light, like the battlements of an ethereal city. But he had gone blindly forward, and found himself, at last, in the old walled garden

which had seen so many generations of flower and seed.

Horatia's letter had been quite ordinary, speaking of the child, of his future, the necessity of her care, the joy that he was to her. But, of course, she understood . . . And three years ago he would willingly have died for her ; now he could not even live for her ! As for his own letter of last week, he could not think how he had ever brought himself to write it—and yet were it to write again, he must have said the same. He belonged, now, body and soul, to a force whose demands on some lives were so exorbitant as to come into mortal conflict even with the best and holiest human claims.

He ought never to have gone to Compton ; he ought to have left Oxford, at whatever cost of unkindness. He could not say that it had been only pain to go and see her, and since he could not even now accuse himself of having done or said anything amiss, it must have been that his pleasure was visible. . . . He felt an outcast, a pariah. How deeply he had sinned against God he could not fathom, but he had sinned, it seemed to him irretrievably, against the code in which he had been brought up. For if he was a Christian and a priest he was a gentleman, too . . . or had been.

The thought of Dormer came into his mind as he sat there. Dormer would understand—he would despise him, no doubt, but he would understand. He could never tell him. He was sitting among his books in that well-known room scarcely a quarter of a mile away, yet a thousand miles might be between them. He could never tell him, because of Horatia. Besides, he had lost the habit of close intercourse.

And in his misery he did not know that Dormer was at that moment standing on the other side of the basin,

looking at him, across the drowned moon, with the profoundest tenderness, wondering whether he could speak to him now. Only, after a while, he was conscious of someone on the seat beside him, and felt an arm laid across his shoulders.

"Tristram, Tristram, don't sit here in the cold like this. . . . Come to my rooms. . . . I know all about it—she has told me; I have seen her and she wants me to tell you that she understands. . . . You must not take it so hardly; it is all quite simple, and . . . and wonderful, it seems to me. . . . My dear, dear fellow, I don't want to pester you, but if you would only come away . . . " Dormer's voice, ordinarily so cool and restrained, broke suddenly.

There was a silence; Tristram did not move. A London coach rolled over the bridge; the chimes of Magdalen struck a quarter to five. Dormer slowly took away his arm.

And at that Tristram removed one of his hands from his face, and put it out gropingly towards him.

"Carissime . . ."

(2)

The actual writing of the letter to Tristram had not cost Horatia the effort that she had anticipated. She hardly felt, indeed, what she was renouncing, for everything was swallowed up in the sense of rest, a feeling that was partly a physical reaction, due to the intensity of the emotional strain of her interview with Dormer. She seemed to be floating in a sea of such mental and spiritual relief as she had not known for years. Such peace as she had compassed in the summer—she knew it now—had only been a drugged peace after all.

She had had to tell her father. That had not been easy. Yet she had, somehow, dominated his bitter disappointment. She did not show him Tristram's letter, but she did not keep from him the fact that she had been to Oriel. Perfectly calm, and not, apparently, in an exalted state, she yet produced on the Rector the impression of some change so profound as to make her seem another person. He was, if the truth be told, a little alarmed.

But it was the letter which, two days later, she was obliged to write to the Duchesse that really showed Horatia what she was losing. Madame de la Roche-Guyon had said that she should have her own establishment if she wished. It occurred to Horatia, rather bitterly, how much to be envied she would seem to her friends—young, titled, rich, her own mistress, with the entrée to the most exclusive society in the world; and yet—and yet, even with the child, all these advantages were as a pinch of dust. Better to be by Tristram's side in some tiny parsonage, in some dull village . . .

And when this really came home to her she suddenly threw down the pen and covered her face, an action which was the cause of the straggling blot on the page which, later, drew forth from the Duchesse strictures on the untidiness of the English.

But Horatia, neglecting the blot, took up the pen again and went on without flinching to the end. In spite of the sense of suffering, she had something which she had not before. For the first time in her life she could really pray. And already, on this and the days that followed, she had some inkling of what Dormer had meant, some taste of the peace that truly comes to the resigned will. In this ocean of rest she lived for some days, thinking sometimes how wonderful it was

that it should have enclosed her, with all her turbulent desires, in so sudden a gentleness, but not unconscious that its waves broke quietly over a rock of regret.

(3)

"Darling, what are you doing?" she exclaimed, coming suddenly into the study, and surprising her father on his hands and knees on the hearthrug, surrounded by a medley of objects, and trying to stuff something into a large stocking—trying also, with incomplete success, to hide from her both stocking and litter.

"Well, my dear, Christmas will be upon us before very long, and I thought I would try whether they will go in," said the Rector, attempting to pull out the bulky object, which, having refused to enter the stocking now equally refused to be extracted.

He looked ten years older than he had done at the time of their conversation in the night nursery a few days ago. Horatia's heart smote her as—not for the first time—she realised the change, and her eyes were full of tears when, kneeling down by him she put her arms round him and kissed the white hair by his temple.

"Dearest Papa, you can't be going to give him all those toys; it will be so bad for him! Keep some of them for next Christmas."

She had said it without thinking.

"And where . . . where will he be then?" asked her father rather gulpily. A single tear splashed on to the drum which he had succeeded in pulling from the stocking. Horatia bit her lip hard.

"I think, dear, that we shall always come home for Christmas. Or else you will come to us. You will have

a curate soon ; you know we discussed it the other day, and then you will be so free.—What a splendid drum ! Where did you get all these things, you secretive old Papa ? Surely not in Oxford ? "

" I bought them when I was in London the other day, at the Soho Bazaar. I was thinking that we should have such a pleasant Christmas. . . ."

A stab went through Horatia's heart. That broken vision of his was in her mind too—the Christmas hearth, Tristram with the child in his arms, prefigurement of what should be henceforward . . . and what would now never be.

" It will be Maurice's third Christmas," went on the Rector, with an attempt at cheerfulness, thinking from her silence and averted face that he had been too cruel. " I made up my mind last Christmas that he should have——"

A knock caused him to scramble hastily from his unwonted position. Horatia jumped up and went to the door. Martha stood there.

" Please, Mam, would you come to the nursery. I don't think Master Maurice seems quite himself."

Horatia was gone before the Rector had got to his chair. She was back in a few minutes.

" Papa, if I may I shall send Sam Dawes for the doctor. I don't think it is anything serious, at least I hope not, but he seems so drowsy and feverish, and he has been very sick, poor darling."

" He was quite well this morning," observed the Rector, astonished. " Indeed, he was making such a great noise in here that I could hardly get on with my sermon."

(4)

Maurice de la Roche-Guyon, who was to have a drum and many other delights on his third Christmas Day, did not seem likely to receive these now, though as he lay, flushed and brilliant-eyed, chattering to himself, his rambling talk ran sometimes on his small possessions.

"A child to give back to God." All through the two long agonising nights and days the words echoed in Horatia's head, with those others "He is stripping you of everything." Every few hours the doctor came, and there was never any change, except that Maurice's breathing seemed to get more and more rapid as his lungs consolidated. And Horatia could do nothing, for now she could not even pray.

"He is stripping you of everything." Then He wanted from her the last thing, the best thing, the thing incomparably the dearest, not the baby she had refused to look at, not the baby who had been a delightful toy at Plaisance, a growing interest in England, but her own child, her very own, to hold through the years against sorrow and change, to be, not her comfort but her existence, not a consolation for what she had lost, but life itself. And set against it all, inexorable, "a child to give back to God"—not hers at all, but only a treasure lent . . .

"O God, save Maurice—take the rest, take everything, I give it willingly, only save Maurice! I will give him back to You in the end, only leave him a little longer!" But she believed that her prayers could not pierce the thick cloud that hung now between her and the Christ she had so lately come to know, though she never doubted that prayer could reach Him—the prayer of a heart that prayed always . . .

Downstairs were the floods of toys, the half-filled stocking, the holly and the mistletoe ; up here the gift of gifts was going away from her.

"O God, make me so that I can pray to You. . . ."

But there was only Maurice asking, in his shrunk little voice of delirium, for something to drink.

(5)

It was always rather dark in St. Thomas's, and what daylight remained to the December afternoon hung nearly vanquished in the little church. It had been much lighter when Tristram, unlocking the door, had come in over the planks laid along the aisle for a causeway in time of flood, and, passing the disproportionate pulpit, had entered the chancel and knelt down at the altar rails.

Many hours had he spent there during the last two days, holding up before God not his own suffering but that of the woman who suffered for him. Now he could pray no more, but he still knelt, a suppliant at the door of the Divine Pity, a beggar at the Heavenly Gate.

But as the light withdrew itself more and more from the sanctuary, till at last the bare table itself was scarcely visible, he became gradually conscious that this church was not more still than that inner place into which he found himself somehow to have passed, a place of great quietness, of which he had never before possessed the key—the innermost room in the house of his soul. He did not know how he had gained entrance to it—perhaps because he had ceased to strive—he only knew that he was there, that he could never again lose

the way thither, and that this chamber held for him that open vision which he had sought so often and never found.

As he left St. Thomas's he remembered that he must go to Christ Church and ask if the Precentor, who was indisposed, was likely to be well enough to preach the charity sermon on Christmas Day, or whether he wished him to do it. So he walked once more up the way of sorrows that he had traversed three or four days ago, and came out in just the same manner on the front of Christ Church. Lights were beginning to twinkle there, and down the narrow dusk of St. Aldate's, along which he had so often ridden. In Tom Quad he met Canon Pusey, who responded to his salutation by wishing him a happy Christmas, passed on and then turned back.

"By the way, Mr. Hungerford," he said, "I am afraid the Grenvilles at Compton Regis are in sad trouble—but perhaps you know it? I heard from my brother this morning that the little boy, Madame de la Roche-Guyon's child, is very ill—dying, they fear."

The pain in his voice and eyes (his own little Katharine's death being only a year-old wound) was lost on Tristram who, after a moment's horror, forgetful alike of his errand and of himself, had turned and hurried back into St. Aldate's to the nearest livery-stable for a horse.

He probably galloped most of the fifteen miles on the hard December road, for he got there by half-past six. Anyhow the hack came down with him in the dark just outside Compton village, and Tristram, merciful man though he was, left it to the two or three yokels who had collected and hastened on, oblivious of a slightly wrenched knee. Sick at the thought of what he might

hear he rang the bell at the Rectory. Mr. Grenville himself answered it.

"O, my dear Tristram!" he exclaimed, his eyes brimming with tears. "Have you heard—is that why you have come? . . . No, the child is alive . . . the doctor is here now.—Forgive me, come in. . . ."

"Is that Tristram?" exclaimed a breathless voice, and behind her father suddenly appeared Horatia herself. She almost pushed the Rector aside, and seized Tristram by the wrist. "O, thank God, thank God that you have come!" And, the ghost of herself, she fairly dragged him across the hall into the drawing-room and shut the door.

"Tristram, our Lord has sent you! Listen, for you can save Maurice—only pray, pray as you never prayed before! It is the crisis. He will listen to you—I know He will!"

And, as suddenly as she had appeared, she was gone.

* * * * *

The stable clock struck nine. Steps came down the stairs, and voices; the outer door shut.

The Rector appeared at the drawing-room door, mopping his eyes. He beckoned and Tristram, with a sinking heart, followed him out of the room and up the stairs. Half-way up Mr. Grenville put away his handkerchief, and it was then obvious that his tears were tears of joy. He gripped Tristram's arm.

"He will live, my dear boy, he will live, thank God!"

He continued to ascend, and Tristram, hardly knowing why, went after him. They came to the nursery floor. A door was ajar. The Rector stood aside, but Tristram did not enter.

From the threshold he saw, as in a frame, part of the room within, and the little crib against the wall by

which Horatia was kneeling, with bowed head. Over her shoulders was a shawl of Chinese silk, blue as lapis-lazuli, studded with the golden eyes of dragons, and glorified, like the shining auburn of her hair, by the mingled light of lamp and fire. For him the picture seemed to hold the love and pain of years, his own and hers, barren and fruitful both, and he did not know that he could look any more. . . .

The child stirred. Horatia rose from her knees, and bending over him began very gently to rearrange a pillow. The change of position gave Tristram to her sight, and so he went softly in and stood by her side, looking down with her at him.

Maurice lay fast asleep, breathing quietly, and more natural of hue—a frail bark rejected by the great tide that washes so hungrily round the shores of the little island of life, and whose receding is nearly as full of awe as its oncoming. To the man and the woman looking at him the spray of that ocean seemed still wet in his curls.

" You have given him back to me," said Horatia in a voice less than a whisper, and, to herself, more faintly still, " God did not ask *all*."

For answer Tristram stooped and kissed her son.

In the doorway he looked back, and at last the toll levied on human nerves by days of so much strain and anguish was demanded of him. A momentary hallucination of the sense —nothing but that, he knew it—but all his life it was to remain with him, in mysterious consolation, that for one heart-beat he saw there, in Horatia's place, a Woman wrapped, like her, in a blue mantle glinting with light, kneeling in adoration of a Child.

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

THE MORN

THE barrel-organ which was grinding out "Keemo Kimo" changed with a hiccough to "Bobbing Around," and the ring of tattered dancers likewise made some alteration in their steps. Five very dirty little girls composed the corps de ballet, and a small boy industriously kicking an empty can along the gutter added further orchestral harmony. This youth had already rejected the offer of his peers to "play at the Relief of Lucknow," having learnt by experience that the rôle of a Sepoy was unenviable, that it was vain ever to aspire to the part of Sir Colin Campbell, and still retaining, in this autumn of 1859, unpleasant recollections of the massacre of Cawnpore, as staged by the same players in a certain backyard two years ago.

Had it been daylight this long street of the great seaport town would have showed for what it was, a slum, but the evening darkness of the last day of October veiled some of its worst features, while it caused the radiance pouring from the *Dockers' Arms*, half-way along it, to gain tenfold in attraction. Outside this resort two sailors were engaged in a muddled argument, not sufficiently foreshadowing blows to recall the now scattered impersonators of the Indian Mutiny, but interesting enough to cause the pensive child with the can to direct his football towards them with a gleam of hope.

He was rewarded otherwise than he had foreseen, and, after a moment's delighted gazing along the vista beyond the public-house, abandoned his tin and ran back towards the dancers.

" Victorier ! Victorier ! there's a swell coming ! I seen 'im—coming this way ! "

The conviction in her brother's tone detached Victorier from her pirouetting. She followed his finger and saw that his imagination had not betrayed him, as sometimes, into falsehood, for a figure answering indubitably to his description came at that moment into the light of the *Dockers' Arms*, the half-drunken sailors made way for it, and, in a moment or two, the organ, now ploughing mournfully through " Poor Dog Tray," had lost its fascination, and Victorier's fellow-artistes, were all standing at gaze.

The newcomer was a tall young man in a greatcoat, palpably a gentleman ; to any instructed eye a soldier, but not—though this would have taken some discernment to detect—an Englishman. To the children he was merely a swell, and his passage heralded as such by cries that rang along the street, bringing a slatternly woman or two from an alley, and rousing occasional comment from male loungers. But the young man exhibited no sign of embarrassment at these attentions, and, stranger still, he seemed to know his way in his surroundings. Indeed, on the open-mouthed Victorier he bestowed, so she declared for days afterwards, " a lovely smile " and a " Time you were in bed, little girl," ere he passed out of sight into the ill-lighted gloom.

As the street left the *Dockers' Arms* behind, it became slightly more respectable, and signs of some agency at work began to appear, for though the uninformed might not have known that a nondescript

building on the left was a school, no one could have mistaken that it was a Sister of Mercy who suddenly emerged from one of the houses near. But the swell evidently did not need these tokens to guide him towards his objective, and, indeed, as the street turned a little, it was before him—a big church, lighted up. When he realised this latter fact the young man hesitated a moment; then he made his way, as one who knows his whereabouts, to a small door, and pushing it cautiously open, went through.

An intense, almost strained silence reigned within, so that for a moment it was difficult to realise how large a congregation was there, and how varied—clerks, dockers, women with shawls over their heads, women in fashionable bonnets, ragged boys, a few sailors. The great gilt cross suspended from the roof over the chancel steps glimmered faintly in the lowered lights. From the screened-off door by which he had entered, Maurice de la Roche-Guyon could have seen a section of the great raised choir, and half the altar, severe and simple, even on a festival, but it was not in this direction that he looked. He looked at the pulpit.

He saw there a spare, rather shrunken figure that rested both thin hands—and not without a suggestion of leaning for physical support—on the edge of the stone. Then he checked an exclamation. Not since the days after Balaclava had he seen anything like this. Across the preacher's forehead, from grey hair to eyebrow, ran a terrible scar, red and puckered, straight as a swordcut but not so clean-edged, showing the worn and thoughtful face to be as much that of a soldier as of a priest.

"*Children*," said the slow, very clear voice, "*I*

commend you from the bottom of my heart into the captivity of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The tension was lifted, the lights went up, and the voice that Maurice was waiting for gave out the first lines of a hymn:

> " Spouse of Christ, in arms contending
> O'er each clime beneath the sun . . ."

So he *was* there ! The young Frenchman slipped out, and went round to the clergy-house.

Mrs. Squire, the housekeeper, a small wiry lady of varied, and especially of conversational gifts, opened the door herself.

" Lor bless me ! " she exclaimed exhibiting much surprise. " Well, I never ! Fancy you poppin' in like this, Sir, and all the way from foreign parts, too, I suppose. They're all in the church, Sir ; been at it this long time.—But come in ; I hope you're well, Sir—your Grace, as I should say. You must be tired, and want some supper, I'm sure."

" Thank you, Mrs. Squire, I am very well, and I've had supper," responded the young man, following her into the narrow hall. " But I do want a bed for the night, and to-morrow night, too, if you have a room."

" You can't 'ave the guest-room, Sir," said Mrs. Squire, opening a door, " seein' as the Vicar's sleepin' there, because he would have Mr. Dormer put in *his* room, but Mr. Johnson he's away, and I'll have 'is room ready in 'alf-an-hour. If you'll please to step in here, Sir."

A lamp was already burning in the study, but the fire demanded her attention. The visitor meanwhile began to divest himself of his greatcoat. The light showed him pleasant to look upon, fair rather than dark, with

a small sunburnt moustache and a very lively expression, while the removal of his outer garment revealed a tiny scrap of red ribbon in his buttonhole.

"Now, Sir, you make yourself comfortable here, and I'll have a snack of something ready for you when they come in." At this point a thought appeared to strike Mrs. Squire, for she shut the door and advanced mysteriously on the young man.

" I think I ought to warn you, Sir, that when you see Mr. Dormer, you may have a shock."

" I've had it ! " said Maurice with a little grimace. " I saw him in the church. Tell me about it quickly, before he comes in. It was an accident, I suppose ? My mother heard that he had not been well, but no more than that."

Mrs. Squire sniffed. " That's what they told her Ladyship, no doubt, and that's what they told more than one ! Mr. Dormer he hates to have it mentioned, but he'll carry the mark to his dying day. Nothing to be ashamed of, rather the opposite, I says, but you know what Mr. Dormer is. Nor I wouldn't say nothing about it to the Vicar, Sir, if I was you—Not well, indeed, and 'im unconscious for twenty-four hours, and the Vicar, when 'e 'eard about it, in such a taking as I've never seen 'im, and off up to London at once, and. . ."

" But what was it, Mrs. Squire ? "

" A brick, Sir."

" A brick ! " repeated Maurice, mystified. " Do you mean off a house ? "

"Thrown at 'im, Sir, and cruel hard ! Ah, there's wicked people in this world ! In London it was, at one of them nasty places by the docks, St. George's-in-the East. They've got what they calls a mission there, and there was dreadful disturbances going on all summer,

even in the church itself, if you'll believe me, so that they could 'ardly 'old their services. A very low lot, Sir, and paid to do it, roughs 'ired by them as keeps bad 'ouses thereabouts and the like, so I've 'eard. Well, Mr. Dormer goes there in August to preach for them, and coming out of the church there was a terrible riot. Fancy 'im alone in an 'owlin' mob without so much as an umberella in 'is 'and !—not, I'm sure, that 'e'd 'ave used anything if 'e'd 'ad it. A pity you wasn't there, Sir, with them queer baggy soldiers of yours. Well, the end of it was one of these villains throws a brick at 'im—pretty near did for 'im altogether, I believe. This 'ere's the first time he've preached since." Mrs. Squire paused, and then added judicially, " Of course I don't deny we've 'ad trouble 'ere before now, as your Grace knows, though not for a long time, and I can't say as I approves of all the 'igh Church goings on. Not that I'm saying anything against the Vicar, for I wouldn't leave him not if he was to turn Papist to-morrow. Where 'e goes I goes, if it's to the Pope of Rome 'imself —the Lord forgive me for saying so."

She went to the windows and gave a twitch to the already drawn curtains, as Maurice digested this information, and also had a sudden little memory of a gory combat waged by him in boyish days with an urchin who asseverated that that —— parson was a —— Papist, the champion only remembering at its victorious close that he was a Papist himself.

" Between you and me, Sir," resumed Mrs. Squire confidentially, " I shan't be sorry when Mr. Dormer's gone back, for I shouldn't like a death in the 'ouse, and it's my belief 'e's not long for this world. Not fit for this preachin', any'ow, and don't eat 'ardly nothin'. . . . But 'ow I do run on. I daresay the Vicar won't

be late, Mr. Dormer being 'ere, though sometimes, if you'll believe me, he ain't in from church till after compline. It gets worse, Sir ; selfish, I calls it, keeping 'im out of bed with their sins, and then all this getting up early in the morning. The Vicar is strong, thanks be, but he ain't so young as he was, and it tells on him. Can't see, meself, as the Almighty asks so much of us. Where's your bag, if you please, Sir ? "

The news that it was being brought up from the railway station and might arrive any moment, put a term to Mrs. Squire's volubility, and she departed.

Maurice de la Roche-Guyon looked round the room thus left to him with a smile of recognition. Of fair size, though somewhat choked up with furniture, much of which belonged to a past decade of the Mahogany Age, it was spotlessly clean and possessed a sort of shabby comfort. There was little to mark it as the room of a priest, since any person with a large correspondence might have had so littered a writing-table—the sight of whose contents filled the beholder with wonder and thankfulness that he should ever have received a reply to a letter—and the pictures were mostly views of Oxford, the High, Oriel, and a couple of Dighton's caricatures. Only in a corner of the room was a little water-colour drawing of average execution, representing the Madonna kneeling by the child Christ in the manger. On the window-sill were several flower-pots containing forlorn geranium stems, green tips with yellow leaves at the base. Maurice did not know if the pathetic hope of preserving geraniums through the winter had ever been realised, but he supposed that it had, since the pots persevered. They

had been in exactly the same depressed condition when he was here a year ago.

He threw himself into one of the armchairs by the fire. The spring was broken, so he exchanged it for another. Tristram's chairs were given to broken springs. It was either the same chair, never mended, or else succeeding occupants were heavy. He stretched out his legs and smiled to himself, thinking of the great news he brought and of Tristram's pleasure in hearing it. Most important events in his life had been unfolded to Tristram, since the occasion on which he had first sat in a springless chair and waited for him. Not that he had smiled then. . . .

It had been in dull quarters in the next street, before the clergy-house was built, that Maurice had first sat in a broken-springed chair and wished that chair and remaining springs and he might sink into the earth. He was in his first year at Eton, and his adored English grandfather having recently died he had begged to be allowed to spend Christmas (it was that of 1844) with Tristram, before going for the rest of the holidays to his mother's cousins in Cavendish Square. It was a curious preference for a small boy brought up in stately surroundings, to go into a dingy habitation in the neighbourhood of docks, but to Maurice it was an adventure of the wildest nature. Although he could not have explained it, to be with Tristram at all meant a feeling of freedom. There were so many things which, according to Tristram's code, did not seem to matter; but the fact that he was not punished for spilling ink and tearing his clothes only convinced him that really to transgress might be very uncomfortable indeed.

Maurice, though he was an only child, had been brought up by an almost military discipline to an exact

obedience, even to the acceptance without question of those mixed ecclesiastical surroundings which had always puzzled him. Maman, though she prayed so much, never went with him to Mass. M. le Curé, in the country, when pressed would shake his head and say that Madame la Comtesse was Anglicane et très dévote, and although not a Catholic not quite a Protestant. As if to excuse this enlightened view he would add that she believed in the Real Presence, that she had a crucifix in her oratory, and that Mr. Dormer, for whose learning he had a great respect, was her director. Yet this very director (whose infrequent appearances were vaguely disliked by Maurice) seemed to be on the best of terms with his own kinsman Prosper de la Roche-Guyon, and though one was a Bishop of the Catholic Church and the other a Protestant pastor, they looked, to the son of Armand, very much alike—except that he was somewhat afraid of Mr. Dormer and not at all of His Grandeur. His mother herself would say, "Mon fils, you are a Catholic and a Frenchman. Monseigneur de Troyes will tell you what you ought to think." The Bishop's explanation, if painstaking, was unintelligible, and left Maurice with the responsibility of praying for the conversion of his mother, his grandfather Grenville, his " Uncle " Tristram Hungerford, Mr. Dormer, and a quantity of persons at Oxford of whom he had never heard. After this he abandoned for a time his pursuit of knowledge.

But Eton had revived and intensified his bewilderment, and it suddenly came to him that now was the chance of asking Uncle Tristram. He knew that Tristram was the curé of this great parish, that the church which could be seen from the windows would soon be finished, but he was forbidden to enter a

Protestant temple, and an Anglican church was certainly not Catholic, so it must be Protestant. Partly because of the prohibition he had an enormous desire to see the inside of this edifice, and as there seemed no possibility of its being gratified, he added to his nightly petitions for the conversion of Tristram to the Roman obedience, the turning of the Church of the Passion into a Catholic place of worship.

Christmas Day came. Maurice set off, lonely, to the Catholic chapel not far away for Mass. As he came back he had to pass the Mission church, which was used until the completion of the permanent building. It was midday, and the bell stopped ringing a little before he reached the door. He listened; a harmonium was playing *Venite adoremus*. Why should he not peep inside; no one would see. He yielded to the temptation and slipped in, to find himself almost touching Uncle Tristram's surpliced back at the end of the procession which, with some difficulty, was squeezing round the small building. He decided to stay.

The church was decked with holly and flowers, and the tiny sanctuary was hung with red. Maurice was much interested, especially as his ideas of Protestant worship were extremely vague, so that he was surprised to see what was clearly an altar (though it seemed to him, with only two lighted candles and a cross, very bare), and to listen to a service which, for all its lack of Latin, of bells, and of inaudibility, was presumably some kind of a mass. But gradually his interest waned. He began to see clearly what he had done. He had not only been disobedient, but had dealt a wound to that implicit trust which he always felt that Tristram reposed in him, and the delicacy of Tristram's position was quite plain to the half-French boy. At the communion of the

people he went out. The rest of Christmas Day, spent at the house of a churchwarden with a large family, lacked enjoyment. Nothing was said on his return, and he felt pretty sure that Tristram had not seen him. But next day, after breakfast, he waited for him in a broken-springed chair.

"I was at the Mass yesterday."

"I know," said Tristram.

"I mean I was at your Mass."

"I know," said Tristram again. "I've been waiting for you to tell me." There was a silence.

"You have my pocket-money," suggested a miserable voice, for Maurice always associated misdeeds with an immediate penalty, and anything was better than suspense. But he looked up from the floor to find that Tristram was smiling.

"My son," said the latter, "for your punishment I am going to explain to you the Anglican position. I have always disagreed with your mother in not trying to make this clear to you before."

It was not punishment to Maurice. Sin had brought him what had never been granted to virtuous behaviour. He listened with the most rapt attention, until Tristram, leaning back in his chair, said "Do you understand now, my boy, why you are forbidden to attend an Anglican service? It is for this reason that you must regard me as a heretic, though *I* can believe myself and you to belong equally to the Catholic Church. Perhaps you can understand, too, how hard it has been for your mother, so ardently devoted to her own faith, to bring you up in a religion which must of necessity separate you from her. Not that she ever hesitated."

He got up. "Come with me, Maurice. I am going to show you something." And, leading him to a little

room at the top of the house, he unlocked a chest. "I won't take them out, but you can see what they are—the full Eucharistic dress of a priest."

"Oh, Mass vestments," said Maurice, looking in.

"They have been given, but they cannot be worn yet." He unlocked another case and showed the boy the sacramental plate, still unconsecrated. One of the chalices was studded with large pearls, the other with different stones.

"What fine pearls!" observed Maurice. "I have never seen such large ones, except on a rope that Maman used to wear. Now she hardly wears any jewels."

"These were your mother's," said Tristram. "She wished to give all her personal jewels—all except those belonging to your family, which will come one day to your wife." (He always spoke to Maurice in a matter-of-fact way, as though Maurice were grown up.) "And here, you see, set in the paten, is a little old Anglo-Saxon brooch that she used to wear as a girl, and which she gave to me long ago.—Now I'll show you the church."

Maurice bore away from that visit an impression of surprising dignity, simplicity, and space. He had seen the raised chancel, the still more raised sanctuary, the stone altar, which it was doubtful if the Bishop would consecrate, and the beautiful marble font, a memorial to his grandfather Grenville, set in almost equal honour in the apse at the west end. He had been told that there would be no galleries or pews, that the church was to be quite free and always open, and that one day a great cross or crucifix would hang from the roof. As they left he caught sight of a little inscription on a stone let into the wall near the door—"Pray for the sinner who built this church."

Going through the porch he said, reflectively, "I suppose that as it is such a large church he was a very wicked man."

But Tristram gave no answer.

Maurice had looked forward to his next Christmas in the new clergy-house, and next Christmas had, indeed, found him there, but in company with Mr. Dormer and great gloom—unwelcome circumstances which it took him some time to connect with a certain notable conversion to his own communion in the previous October. But what mattered to Maurice was much less that the Church of England had lost John Henry Newman, than that the Church of the Passion was now offering a haven among its priests to its founder, and that the centre of interest at the clergy-house had shifted from him, Maurice, to the man who was mourning not only the defection of a leader but the loss of a friend.

But when next he came to scale the church roof and plague the curates, Mr. Dormer seemed to have gone, not to Oxford but to London, and careful cross-questioning of the new deacon elicited facts which, to Maurice's mind, could only mean that Mr. Dormer would perhaps one day become a monk. How this could be, even in the Church of England as explained by Tristram, was a mystery, but since such a calling presupposed a fixed abode, and, for the time being, Mr. Dormer was certainly settled in London, Maurice had got all the information that he wanted. There was no cloud now upon a visit to Uncle Tristram, and one delightful summer even brought his mother to stay at the hotel in the fashionable quarter of the town. By a coincidence, which Maurice was not able to appreciate, the arrival of the French comtesse was recorded in

close proximity to "More Popish Practices of a Puseyite Priest."

A kind of sporting interest in the Tractarian Movement was a curious possession for a French soldier and a sound Catholic. Yet, just when the English newspapers were full of the battle of the Alma, the post bore to Tristram, recently inhibited for hearing confessions, a letter from the seat of war adjuring him to stick to his guns, and this from a young man who knew that an Anglican clergyman cannot bind or loose, whatever the opinions of his bishop.

At this moment, however, the writer of that epistle had some grounds for wishing that the inhibition had not been removed, or that Tristram's invalid absolutions were not sought at such a late hour. Looking round for something to occupy him, the Duc de la Roche-Guyon caught sight of a heap of *Punches* in a corner. He guessed why they were there. Mr. Punch was strongly, even rabidly, "anti-Puseyite," and it was characteristic of Tristram cheerfully to preserve the numbers in which this guardian of public morals had also constituted himself Defender of the Faith. Here, for instance, was the succession of last year's cartoons dealing with the alleged Romanist tendencies of "Soapy Samuel," the Bishop of Oxford, and the Puseyite cleric being kicked downstairs by the united boots of Mr. Punch and John Bull. After what he had just heard about St. George's-in-the-East, Maurice was not greatly surprised to find Mr. Punch warning "reverend gents who think fit to make images, figures, or guys of themselves" to beware of an "iconoclastic spirit" which plainly had his approval. In the current number itself, the Rector of St. George's, in a notice headed "Nathan's

Clerical Costumes," addressed to " sacristans, footmen of the superior Roman Catholic clergy and others," was made to express himself desirous of purchasing " any amount of the left-off vestments of priests " and to offer " a liberal allowance for holy candle ends and waste incense."

Maurice put down the paper with a shrug, but as he stooped to pick up a number which had fallen open on the floor, his eye was caught by the words "Margaret Street" and "All Saints" :—

" The All Saints crows his Lordship pets,
And, hoping against hope, forgets
The many birds that thence have come,
Fled to the rookery of Rome.

. . . . . .

" Can it be right to consecrate
The new church in Street Margaret,
Which looks more Puseyite by far
Than English churches elsewhere are ? "

He read these lines with interest, because he knew that the famous Tractarian church had once been Margaret Chapel, where his mother had been married. Then he laughed, and threw the paper away.

What a devil of a time they were in coming ! He got up and looked at the photograph of a young man in uniform on the mantelpiece, one of Tristram's lads. Five years ago, at Inkerman, after his regiment had carried, at the point of the bayonet, the seven times captured and recaptured Sandbag Battery, the young lieutenant of Zouaves had happened to address a word or two in English to one of the rescued men of the 95th, and thus, amid the carnage, had made the surprising dis-

covery of a common friend in an English clergy-house . . .

Maurice put his elbows on the chimney-piece. Four years more of soldiering, encounters with Kabyles in Africa, even this summer's guns of Magenta and Solferino, had done little to efface the memory of Sebastopol, its horror and its glory. Still, in dreams, he led his men through the iron hail up to the Malakoff; still, sometimes, felt again the shock and blankness when that hail had scorched him too, and he fell, not knowing that he had outdone the daring even of his own most daring corps. More pleasant to dream of was the waking in hospital and the finding, pinned to the sheet, the red-ribboned, five-pointed star, the Cross of the Legion of Honour, which they had doubted if he would live to receive. Most pleasant of all, the putting it into his mother's hands.

The Crimea had won him that, and his step as captain. Last July had brought him more promotion; last month still more. But last week had given him —— he smiled and pulled at his ridiculous moustache. Grand Dieu! what had he done to deserve such happiness?

Here they were at last! The young man deliberately went out of the lamplight into a corner and stood with his back to any who should enter. The door opened.

"You know, Charles," the well-remembered voice was saying, "that unless you obey me in this I shan't allow you to preach at all to-morrow."

And the other voice, palpably tired, but very quiet and even, replied: "If I were you, Tristram, I would not utter threats before witnesses. Look there!"

Maurice turned slowly round and faced the two

priests, but the blur of shadow hid the smile on his face.

"There is nothing the matter?" asked the taller, a note of sharp alarm in his tone. "Horatia—your mother is not ill?"

"No, no!" cried Maurice, instantly repenting of his jest. "No—there is nothing the matter—only good news!" And, flinging himself at Tristram Hungerford, he embraced him in French fashion.—"How do you do, Mr. Dormer? I heard your sermon—that is to say the end of it."

"I saw you," said Dormer, smiling, as he shook hands, and Tristram exclaimed, "Oh, were you there, my dear boy? Come and sit down, Charles, and then we must hear this good news. Supper will be up in a moment—but I hope you have had something more substantial, Maurice?" And, evidently torn between a desire to pilot his friend to the most comfortable chair and eagerness to hear the promised tidings, he accomplished the first before taking hold of Maurice and saying "Well?"

And then it burst out.

"Solange will marry me, and what is more, will marry me in three weeks' time!"

"At last!" exclaimed Tristram. "My boy, I am so glad! But why is it so very sudden?"

A sort of struggle between satisfaction and sadness was visible in the young soldier's manner as he replied, "Because I am ordered to Algeria next month, and must sail from Marseilles on the 25th. You see, they have made me lieutenant-colonel."

Tristram gave an exclamation, and Maurice went on quickly. "Solange is so wonderful; she has given up all idea of a great wedding. She said at once that if

she was to marry a soldier she could be ready in three weeks."

"What did her mother say?" asked Tristram.

"Oh, Maman arranged all that," returned Maurice, sitting down astride a chair. "She is almost as pleased as I am that it has come all right."

"Or as I am," said Tristram. "How long can you stay, Maurice?"

"Only long enough to tell you all about it. I told Maman I might sleep here two nights if there was room. Will you let me, mon père?"

"My dear boy, what a question! So you came all this way just to tell me—you left Mademoiselle Solange and your mother, who has you now for such a short time, for that?"

"Mademoiselle Solange sent you a message that she remembered you perfectly, that next time she would not allow me to leave her, and that she should come with me to visit you. As for Maman, when did she ever think of herself? Of course she wanted me to come and tell you. Besides, what a fuss about nothing! Who came over to see me when I was invalided home after the Crimea?"

"Hasn't this promotion followed very quickly on that which you got after the Italian campaign this summer?" asked Dormer, breaking in for the first time.

"You know I have always been luckier than my deserts!" explained the young man laughing. "Tiens! someone at the door!"

It was Mrs. Squire with a tray, and so, in a moment or two Maurice, drinking his coffee, was able to take a swift survey of his companions. There were a few more threads of grey in Tristram's dark, grizzled hair, a line

or two more on his face, but yes, he was looking well, and young for his years. But Mr. Dormer—no, for the last twelve years or so he had looked much older than Tristram, and now, not ill exactly, but fragile in the extreme. Everything that was not spirit seemed to have ebbed away from his face, where, by reason of its bloodlessness, the angry line of the great scar was all the more noticeable. Indeed, it was hard to keep one's eyes off it, hard too, to avoid surprising the anxious glances cast by Tristram at his friend, who was evidently very tired.

Voices in altercation had been heard for some time in the hall, and now, as the simple meal drew to its close, reached a climax.

"Whatever is that noise?" exclaimed the visitor. "Not, surely, more ri——" He stopped himself in time.

"I think I had better go and see," said Tristram, getting up.

Maurice laid a hand on his arm. "Let them fight it out, mon père! It is my first night, and I have only two."

Outside a child's voice was raised in a dismal howl. Tristram gently extricated himself. "I must go," he repeated. At the some moment there was a knock at the door, and Mrs. Squire appeared, in some agitation. The little hall seemed entirely blocked up with people, a young cleric among them. Tristram closed the door behind him.

"What a place to live in! What a life—never a moment's peace!" exclaimed the young Frenchman.

"Tristram is wanted by everybody all day long," said Dormer.

"I'm not surprised," returned Maurice; "but I wanted him to-night."

Dormer shook his head as if it were hopeless. Then he said:

"Have I congratulated you, Maurice, as I should do? I don't think I have. I am most sincerely glad about Mademoiselle de Béthisy. Your mother has wished for it so long—and I have hoped for it, too. Then there is your rapid promotion. I suppose, my dear boy, that one can hardly congratulate you enough!"

He smiled, a very sweet and human smile that made him look suddenly years younger, and held out his hand, just as the door opened and Tristram reappeared, glancing down at someone behind him.

"Come in, Jack! You shall have some hot coffee, and be quick about it, and then I will come with you."

A thin, ragged boy of about twelve, all eyes, shyly followed him. In Tristram's arms, wrapped round with an old red shawl, was a rosy little girl, not much more than a baby, from whose cheeks Tristram was removing, presumably with his own handkerchief, a few remaining tears.

"Pour out some coffee, Maurice, will you?" he said. "No, Mary had better have milk only."

"There are no cups," observed Dormer, making to ring the bell.

"Here is mine," said Tristram, seizing it with his free hand. "Jack and Mary won't mind, and there is no time to lose."

"You are not going out again!" exclaimed Maurice in dismay.

"My dear boy, I'm afraid I must! I'm so sorry." He put the infant down in his chair, but as she immediately started to howl he picked her up again, and

began to pour the milk down her throat himself. "You see, their mother has refused to have her baby christened. Now it is dying, and Jack has brought a message that if the Vicar would come himself she would have it 'done.' Mrs. Squire, who I am afraid is getting ideas of her own about who is and who is not to see me, has been trying to persuade them to take Wilmot or French, but the boy knew it would be useless, and seems to have been arguing with them all for the last ten minutes. That was what we heard. So I must go myself; I can't help it."

"You never could," said Maurice, getting up and stretching himself. "I shall come with you, mon père. Is it far?"

"Yes, it's right down by the docks. Now, Jack, ready?" He shouldered the drowsy bundle. "Charles, don't sit up, I beg of you! It is a dark night, and we shall be at least an hour."

They went out, Tristram in his shabby cassock, the head of curls on his shoulder, the ragged boy's hand in his, and Maurice, Duc de la Roche-Guyon, Zouave of the Guard.

But Dormer sat motionless in his chair, his hands laid along the arms. "When did she ever think of herself?" Jack and Mary had cause to say the same, had they but known their debt to a greyhaired and crinolined French lady, the envied mother of a soldier one day to be famous. Yet it was not greyhaired and crinolined that Horatia de la Roche-Guyon came to the door of the priest's memory to-night, but as he had once seen her in a Parisian drawing-room, a few years after her return to France, still young, laughing, admired—marked nevertheless, to his eyes, with a sacrifice so deep that

no one, perhaps for that very reason, could have guessed at its existence. There were times, he knew, when not even her child could comfort her. But from that aching loneliness the captivity of the Cross had long since set her free.

Yet Tristram, whose outward life was hard, had suffered less, for from the beginning it seemed as if the promise had been fulfilled to him, an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions. Tristram, who had been almost the last to see the vision which had called to his friends in the streets and gardens of Oxford, was, after all, one of the first to interpret it to others. Of those friends he who, among the shining spires, had seen it most clearly, was come many years since to the city whose builder and maker is God. But though the inspiration of his ardour was so early taken from them, though some were scattered, some disheartened, Hurrell Froude lived on in those who fought and suffered with unwavering hope. To these the vision splendid still beckoned, but for their leader, the brother of his spirit, it had faded into the light of common day. And so, haunted by his dream, John Henry Newman had gone out from among his own people, and for him another vision dawned.

But Charles Dormer was not unfaithful to his early vision. For though he too had not found,—though he no longer looked for—a perfect Church, he had seen amazingly disclosed, in his own communion, the treasures of a real if forgotten Catholicity. He had seen the slaves in the prison-house of sin free servants in the palace of a King, Who Himself struck off their fetters, and, clothing them in the garments of His righteousness, led them by the steep stairs of penitence

to the protection of the angels, the companionship of the saints, that they might sit, even with the princes of His household, guests at the banquet of His love. Henceforward disappointment, failure, persecution, defection were to the Tractarian but proofs that the Church of England was indeed a part of the Body of Christ, for, all unworthy, she bore the marks of the Passion of her Lord.

And now the vision of the Light Divine, drawing him always out of the battle and the conflict, luring him still further into the way of prayer, had brought him at last to a dark place where he lay so close to God that he could no longer see Him, where, in the tomb of life, he waited the first rays of the Resurrection Glory.

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